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# HOW TO STUDY ENGLISH LITERATURE

WITH AN APPENDIX ON  
FINE PASSAGES IN PROSE AND POETRY  
SELECTED BY  
PROF. DOWDEN, THOMAS HARDY, GEORGE MEREDITH  
AND MANY OTHERS

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## INTRODUCTION

1. THE object of this manual is to assist the student and the general reader in the study of English Literature. Consequently it is a book of methods, and there will be no attempt to tell the story of literature in these islands or to enter into detail respecting great writers and great periods. We seek to render the same service that a compass renders to a mariner in a voyage across the ocean—the compass, of itself, will accomplish nothing unless the mariner will adventure his ship on the high seas. In like manner it is hoped this little book will guide those who may use it in their first attempts to understand the subject, and by a wise economy of time and the adoption of true methods bring about the best results of enjoyment and culture.

## INTRODUCTION

### THE PLAN

2. How do we propose to carry out the programme? In this way. There is a kind of study which is wrong—wrong in principle and wrong in its effects. This will be dealt with under the heading of *How NOT to Study Literature*. It treats of Reading *versus* Study, Literary Knowledge *versus* Literary Culture, and the undue prominence given to Philology. The right kind of study will then be discussed in two sections, the first covering the ground of theory by attempting to define literature and considering its nature in reference to Language, Art, Personality, History, and the Ideal. The second part contains suggestions as to specimen studies of a poem, a drama, a novel, and an essay. Following this will appear a chapter on *Practical Hints*, in which the results of observation, experience, and reading will be embodied.

A number of pages are devoted to *Literary Criticism*, and the aim has been to indicate the present condition of opinion on this im-

## INTRODUCTION

portant topic. The wants of the examination student receive attention in *English Literature in Public Examinations*. The cram question is discussed, and an endeavour made to steer a middle course between the evil and the good ; specimen questions and answers are provided.

The Appendix on *Fine Passages in Prose and Poetry* is duly explained in a prefatory note.

Doubtless this plan thus outlined is not without defects, but if it can be justified as a piece of frank utilitarianism it will have served its end and accomplished the author's design.



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# HOW TO STUDY ENGLISH LITERATURE

## CHAPTER I.

### HOW NOT TO STUDY ENGLISH LITERATURE

IT has been said that wherever there is a virtue there is sure to be a vice, and although I am not philosopher enough to vouch for the universal truth of that saying, I can affirm positively that in matters relating to study it is very often pitiably true. There are young people who fondly imagine they are students because they are fond of reading, or because they possess well-filled bookshelves, and are in the habit of engaging in literary conversations with their friends and acquaintances. Nothing could be further from the truth. *Study* is not simply mental exercise, without aim or discriminating purpose, any

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more than helter-skelter racing about a field is trained athleticism. To be an athlete you must introduce an intelligent plan into your physical recreations, and in like manner, to be a student you must foster a native bent to investigation and reflection by systematic methods.

### **1. Do not Confuse the mere Reading of Books with the Study of Literature.**

It is quite possible to be a great reader, and yet fall far short of understanding the message and feeling the power of a classic utterance. To know a large number of facts relating to out-of-the-way subjects—such as the leading principles of a secret society in the Middle Ages, or the psychic experiments of Eliphas Levi; to be able to talk voluminously about the attempts of travellers to cross Australia, and the adventures that befell them on the way; or to discourse at length on the medicines of the Chinese people—is very interesting and even highly instructive; but the acquisition of knowledge is not what we mean by the study of literature. Pure literature makes an address to the soul as well as to the mind. Hence the accumulating of vast stores of information is altogether beside



## ON READING BOOKS

the mark. An increase in the bulk of knowledge is not synonymous with progressive culture. If I might adapt the words of St. Paul I would say, "Though I have the understanding of all mysteries and all knowledge, and have not the insight of sympathy, I am as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

But let us suppose that you have no desire to warehouse as many facts as possible; rather do you wish to appreciate the best literature in the right way. Well, even then you must achieve something more than the mere reading of the English classics by getting through them at breakneck speed. This sounds too obvious to be stated, and yet there are not a few to whom it is specially applicable. A butterfly passage from novelists to poets, and poets to prose writers, irrespective of age or epoch, is not the way to understand the thought and life of England as expressed in her literature. I do not say that it is impossible to read the *Canterbury Tales*, and then sacrifice Chaucer for a novel by Thomas Hardy, or a poem by Stephen Phillips. We make such leaps from century to century every day. What I do say is that aimless "leaping" from author to author will never bring us the pleasures and profits of genuine

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study. However disagreeable it may be, the fact remains that literature must be pursued according to a definite plan if we wish to partake of its benefits.

### 2. Knowledge **ABOUT** Literature is not necessarily knowledge **OF** Literature.

A man who knows the authors, titles, and dates of the great books of English literary history may be simply a man with a strong memory. Perhaps, too, he can outline the plots of all the best Elizabethan plays, and yet fail to show how those plays are related to the political life of the period, for the reason that whilst he has a mind for literary facts, he cares nothing about literary forces. And there are students who think far more of personal details respecting authors than of the significance of the books they wrote. Such a student is deeply interested in discovering that Thomas Hobbes was rubbed with oil in order to obtain longevity; that Berkeley once nearly hanged himself in order to discover the sensations immediately prior to death; and that Charles Kingsley had a hammock slung across his study. But *The Leviathan*, *The Principles of Human Know-*

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*ledge*, and *Alton Locke*, as expressions of contemporary movements in thought and life, are relegated to quite a secondary position. Of course, it cannot be denied that personal details have peculiar attractiveness, especially those belonging to very distinguished people; but what we object to here is that persistency of literary gossiping which masquerades as genuine study. For instance, there is Charles Lamb. I know men who are great Lambites—at least they think they are; they don't care about reading the *Essays of Elia*; they *have* read them. But they are immensely interested in the conjecture as to where Charles slept the night before he wrote the essay on roast pig. This is nothing short of substituting the husk for the kernel. A book of gossip about authors is necessarily pleasant reading, but it is not the study of literature.

Closely allied with the type of student just referred to is another type, if anything the more distasteful of the two. He is the literary bibliographer. Talk to him about O'Shaughnessy, and he will tell you of that poet's first work, where it was published, how much it cost, and what was the extent of its success. That is very good—so far. No

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knowledge can be despised ; but ask him about O'Shaughnessy's metre, his style, his subjects, and his general significance. What reply do you get ? Usually a quotation from some critic ; at any rate, nothing to show that the bibliographer has entered into the poet's feelings and felt his moments of rapture. Once again it is the husk for the kernel. This laborious compiling of data respecting editions, dates, and prices has its proper place in the writing of literary history and books of reference ; but it is not the first task of the student who wishes to understand English literature.

Minutiæ belong to the specialist and the professor, and also to the private individual, who, after repeated readings of a writer's best work, has determined to make that writer the object of a closer scrutiny. They do not belong to the general student.

Perhaps the most disagreeable person of all is the man who studies literature in histories of the subject, interlarded with specimen passages from the great writers. Could anything be more diabolical from the standpoint of sincerity ? And yet it is astonishing to see what can be done by a man with a good memory after reading Taine. He can talk

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quite learnedly of Shakespeare's indebtedness to Holinshed, quote the finest lines from the tragedies, discourse on the comedies as compared with those of Molière, show how far Shakespeare respected the unities and exhibit the striking ingenuity of his plots. He can do all these things, but he does not know his Shakespeare nevertheless. I have known a student identify a dozen quotations from English authors, embracing a long period set for examination, without ever opening a single book in the original. He had gathered them from "quote" books and histories, and fixed them in his memory. The examination methods can indeed never be perfect, but they can be vastly improved. Here is an excerpt from the experience of Dean Kitchin. "Once, by the way of an easy opening to a *viva voce* examination, I asked a candidate, 'How does Bacon begin his famous essay on marriage?' And the man, with a scared look, replied, 'Might I ask you to erase that book from my list of authors offered?' 'Well,' I said, 'it is a very unusual request. Why do you make it?' 'Oh!' he rejoined, 'I have unluckily lost my notebook to it.' In other words, he had taken down from his tutor's dictation the recognised 'tips' from

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Bacon, and these, had he not mislaid his book, he would have learned by heart, prepared to impose on his examiner. As to looking into the author himself, that he had never dreamed of doing; his tutor, no doubt, told him he could save him all that trouble and 'waste of time.' I have also often examined the ladies who attend the literature classes given under the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching, and they, on the whole, decidedly confirm the view I take. Theirs is a stronger case; they attend the lectures solely to improve themselves. The examination is not compulsory, and, so far as I have seen, does its best to discourage cramming. Yet, with some very honourable exceptions, the results show that here also there is a great risk of the student's mistaking the teacher's dicta, or the facts given in some textbook, for a real knowledge of the literary masterpieces to which her attention has been called. It is often hard to see whether the student has read the works on which she has, in name at least, been engaged."\* It should be impossible for any examiner to have such doubts as these about the papers of a student,

\* *English Literature, and How to Study it.* Pall Mall Gazette Office.

## PHILOLOGY *VERSUS* LITERATURE

and it ought to be morally impossible for that individual to present himself (or herself) for examination in a book which has never been read.

### 3. The Study of Philology is not the Study of Literature.

Some years ago there was a heated contest in the high places of education as to the best methods of teaching English literature, and the battle seemed to be in favour of those who pleaded for a system carried out on philological lines. A good many authorities fought against this proposal, and chief among them was Mr. Churton Collins, who has reproduced the expressions of opinions in his *The Study of English Literature*.<sup>\*</sup> It is certainly hard to overcome Mr. Collins's logic. He shows most conclusively that the methods prevalent at the Universities take it for granted that literature is simply a branch—an important one, of course—of philology, and he proves this by quotations from examination papers and from the notes supplied in editions of English classics. We will take an examination paper first.

<sup>\*</sup> See also the *Pall Mall Gazette* "extra" previously referred to.

## HOW NOT TO STUDY

1. Point out textual difficulties, and mention and criticise any suggested emendations on these passages [then follow in due order the (a) the (b) the (c), etc.].

2. Give some account of the extent and variety of Shakespeare's vocabulary.

3. Mention and discuss some points in which Elizabethan grammar differs from Victorian.

4. What are the relative proportions of the Teutonic and Latin elements in the phraseology of Shakespeare.

Over against this class of question Mr. Collins would suggest the following, which are infinitely better because they deal with matters that are vital to literature in itself.

1. The epithet which best characterises Shakespeare is "myriad-minded." Discuss that statement.

2. Point out Shakespeare's obligations to his dramatic predecessors and contemporaries, and discuss the statement that "Pure Comedy" was his creation.

3. Discuss the theology and ethics of Shakespeare, and show how they bear out Jonson's assertion, that he was "not of an age, but for all time."

4. Discuss Goethe's analysis of the character of Hamlet.

5. Discuss and account for the political teaching of Shakespeare.

Now let us turn to the style of "notes" that too often figure in edited editions of English classics. Mr. Collins says most truly that one often meets with a quarter of a page of profuse erudition like this—



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l. 619. Cp. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, xi. 419; *Faery Queen*, I. xi. 4.

l. 624. Cp. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ix. 6.

l. 630. Cp. Horace *Odes*, iii. 2, 17.

l. 633. Cp. *Paradise Lost*, ii. 692; v. 710; vi. 156. Rev. xii. 4.

l. 642, *tempted our attempt*. Keightley claims to have been the first to point out that these plays upon words are imitations of the Paronomasia in Scripture. Cp. v. 869; ix. 11; xii. 78.

l. 659. *Iliad*, i. 140.

l. 660, *peace is despaired*, a Latinism. So "despair thy charm" (*Macbeth* v. 7).

Can anyone say that this kind of thing is really helpful? No doubt it is to the student of philology pure and simple; but to the student of literature, *per se*, it is a positive hindrance. Professor Hiram Corson says, "When a student perfectly understands a familiar word in a poem, or any other composition he may be reading, to obtrude its etymology, however interesting it may be, upon his attention, is an impertinence. For example, every civilised English-speaking boy or girl knows what a sofa is. In the following passage from Cowper's *Task* (Book I. *vv.* 86-88)—

'Thus first necessity invented stools,  
Convenience next suggested elbow chairs,  
And luxury the accomplished sofa last'—

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the word 'accomplished,' as used here, really needs explanation; but in two different editions of *The Task* in my library, prepared for the use of the young, no explanation is given of it; but in both the Arabic origin of 'sofa' is given. In one the question is asked what other words in English have been derived from the Arabic, and in the other the student is required to explain 'accomplished.' In the name of all that is reasonable, what has the young student to do with words of Arabic origin while he is reading Cowper's *Task*? Uncalled-for, wholly unnecessary information is obtruded upon the student's attention, and an explanation is required of him which it was the business of the editor to give."\*

The true student will not be a "word-grubber," but he will have an intense interest in the history and dynamic power of words all the same; and so far from despising philology, he will give it a place at his right hand as one of the chief means of knowing that language which is the tangible embodiment of the spirit of literature.

Someone asks the question, "If these are

\* *The Aims of Literary Study*, pp. 79-81.

## PHILOLOGY *VERSUS* LITERATURE

the wrong methods of studying English literature, what methods are right?" Before answering that question in detail there are preliminary matters that call for attention, and to these we will now address ourselves.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE TRUE METHOD

#### PART I.—PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

##### 1. What is Literature ?

**W**HEN definitions of literature are legion in number, and often conflicting in character, it is no matter for surprise that there should be confusion as to the real truth. One critic will make the essence of literature to reside in the substance, another in the form, and a third in a union of both. In prosecuting an inquiry into this subject our best plan will be to examine the *uses* of the word Literature, and I propose to begin that examination by supposing the following books are lying on my study table :—

- (1) An Almanac.
- (2) *A Guide to Paris.*
- (3) Huxley's *Lay Sermons.*
- (4) Fielding's *Tom Jones.*
- (5) Milton's *Paradise Lost.*
- (6) The Works of Shakespeare.

## WHAT IS LITERATURE?

They are all written in the English language and in a broad sense are classed as literature. But are they literature really? Well, some of them are, and some of them are not. The first three convey information on various subjects, differing considerably in degrees of utility. The almanac tells us about the changes in the moon, and reminds us of the anniversaries of great events; some of its columns warn us of the approaching season for planting cabbages, and a few sections are devoted to cooking recipes—but, somehow, we never think of calling an almanac—literature. The *Guide to Paris* has perhaps a superior claim to be regarded as a *book*; it contains interesting descriptions of public buildings and monuments; it has an exciting account of the great siege and is throughout written in clear, plain English. Still, though greatly in advance of the almanac, we hesitate to describe it as literature. Next on the list is Huxley's *Lay Sermons*, the main purpose of which is to convey an expert's views on certain aspects of science. In one sense the authors of the almanac, the *Guide to Paris*, and *Lay Sermons* have the same object, namely, to supply information; but in each case there

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is a distinct advance in the *quality* of information—that of the almanac is mainly statistical, that of the *Guide* is mostly topographical, whilst that of the *Lay Sermons* is exposition of the highest class. At the same time no one ventures to call even this kind of exposition—literature; but in view of the pure English, the absolute clearness of statement, and the skilful manipulation of sentence and paragraph, this book is said to have *literary flavour*.

When, however, we turn to Fielding's *Tom Jones* we come into another world altogether. Here there is no attempt to impart information, not even information about things that actually happened to Tom Jones. The events of his history, though probable, were never real events except so far as they were facts in the imagination of Henry Fielding. Nevertheless, they have an interest so absorbing that as we follow the narrative of Tom, Squire Western, and Sophy through its tanglement of humour and gravity, noting meanwhile the striking contrast and clever surprises, together with the convincing progress of action leading to the *dénouement*, we say, "This is literature."

When, too, we turn to *Paradise Lost* and

## WHAT IS LITERATURE?

follow the poet in his flights of imagination ; as we see the bliss of heaven and the dark horrors of hell painted in language the like of which men have not known since, we quiver with infinite emotions and are sure that here is literature of the highest. Lastly, when we dwell on the pages of Shakespeare, "the master of those who know," and witness the broad strokes with which he has set forth almost every human thing, as well as the subtle, delicate pencilling with which he suggests an ever-pervading mystery, we are almost ready to say with the Lycaonians, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men."

There is, therefore, a peculiar something about real literature that differentiates it from other printed matter in the shape of books. What is it? Now of all definitions, perhaps that of De Quincey is the most suggestive, and I quote it as an answer to the question just asked. He says, "There is first the literature of *knowledge* (i.e. science) and secondly, the literature of *power*. The function of the first is to *teach*; the function of the second is to *move*."\* Professor Dowden conveys the same truth in different language :

\* *Essay on Pope.*

## THE TRUE METHOD

“To ascertain and communicate facts is the object of science; to quicken our life into a higher consciousness through the feelings is the function of Art.”\* These definitions teach us that the essence of literature lies in the facts of life as they are artistically conceived and expressed; in other words, experience supplies the raw material, and this is idealised by the transfiguring power of imagination.

### 2. Literature and Art.

Strictly speaking, there is but one art. True, the word “artist” seems to have been monopolised by the painter, but that is not an act of selfishness on his part, rather is it a mere accident of language, for painting, poetry, sculpture, architecture, and prose literature are all governed by the same laws, though each branch of art has a distinct sphere of its own. Now the first principle of art is *selection*—not *imitation*.

Let me illustrate this statement from two pictures: Turner’s “Fighting Téméraire” and Rossetti’s “Dante’s Dream.” In Turner’s picture a superannuated war ship is being towed into port by a small steam tug; the

\* *Studies in Literature*, p. 85.



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sun is setting and flooding the world with glory, and a pale moon appears in the sky. Is this a scene the artist once saw and reproduced from memory? Certainly not. Very probably he had never seen anything of the kind. It is sufficient to know that Turner got the idea of a man-of-war being towed into port for the last time. The next question was, How could the subject be treated artistically? The answer is in the picture itself. "The setting sun images forth the departing glory of the old vessel, while the first quarter of the new moon represents the ascendancy of steam power over the old wooden ships, with their sweep of canvas sail, as seen in the tug towing the vessel into port. There seems to be sadness, too, in the old sun as he takes his last farewell of the fighting ship he has so often companioned on the deep."\* This means that just as the writer uses words and all the resources of language to tell others what he has seen or thought, so the painter uses natural objects and the facts of life to represent the idea that is in his mind. Turn now to "Dante's Dream." What do the red buds and poppies mean? We may be sure they were not put into the picture by accident, or because the

\* *John Ruskin*, by J. M. MATHER.

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artist thought they would look nice; for the details that go to make up a picture are not chosen at random, but selected with the utmost care—a care which keeps in view the idea to be expressed. And when they have been selected they should be grouped so that the total effect will be harmonious and pleasing. Rossetti desired to suggest love and sleep in red buds and poppies. It is thus that art makes an advance upon Nature; it uses Nature's gifts by weaving them into new unities, thereby creating a new world.

What is true in painting is true in literature. A novel is not an imitation or an exact copy of life as we live it; it is rather a selection of characters and events drawn from reading, observation, and experience, and woven into an entirely new story. Take *Illumination* as an illustration. It is quite possible that Harold Frederic knew a Methodist minister who "came a cropper" on account of knowledge that he could not digest; as likely as not he knew a cynical doctor after the type of Dr. Ledsmar; and a curiously disillusioned priest like Father Forbes; he certainly met somebody who sat for Sister Soulsby. But it is just as possible that Theron Ware's original—if he has any basis in fact—was

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never outside the boundary of his native state; that Dr. Ledsmar never knew the priest, and the priest never knew Celia; Celia may have lived in California, and Dr. Ledsmar in Washington—who knows? The real facts underlying these characters are of no concern to us at all; the novelist called them from the north, the south, the east, and the west, and made them know each other in a world which is ideal—the world of art. He may have met Sister Soulsby's prototype in Michigan, and Theron Ware's in Nebraska—it matters little. What we think of now is the way in which he brings them together and shows us how they would have acted and reacted on each other, if they had met in the flesh.

Art therefore is not imitation. Goethe compares the man who thinks it is "to the pet ape who was found eagerly examining the plates in a Natural History, and greedily devouring the pictured beetles." The comparison is more vigorous than polite, but it hits the truth exactly. A picture of ripe fruit is not great art because it makes the observer long for grapes and peaches; neither is a novel fine literature because it contains "just what we have heard people say." No;

## THE TRUE METHOD

to quote an excellent phrase, Art is Nature born again of the Spirit, and true literature is never written unless the facts with which Nature supplies us have been idealised in the imagination and brought forth in concrete forms of beauty.

If the reader, in view of this brief exposition of principles, will turn back to the list of books which I supposed were lying on my table, I think he will see how the volumes conveying information can never be literature in the real sense, and why the others have secured for themselves a high place among the classics.

### 3. Literature and Language.

There are three elements in the creation of a work of art: first comes the artist himself; next, the public to whom he appeals; and thirdly, the medium of communication between the two.

As we, in these pages, have to do with literature, the three elements will be:—

1. The Writer;
2. The Reader; and
3. Language;

and even in so brief a study of first principles as that which we now pursue it would be impossible to pass over the subject of language

in silence. One is often surprised at the scant treatment which language receives from its philosophical and psychological sides. Of philology there is enough and to spare, but of language as a means of arousing imagination and conveying emotion, its dynamical power, its capacity for suggesting what is beyond exact representation—there is far too little.

The first truth to be grasped is that language is imperfect. The fact is quite elementary, to be sure, but it needs to be repeated in view of what is to follow. "Words," said an eloquent Frenchman, "were given to us to conceal thought." There is enough truth in this paradox to warrant an acceptance of the fact that lies beneath. Are not most of our political, religious, scientific, and philosophical discussions dependent on the meaning we attach to words? Is there not something at once pathetic and humiliating in the picture of an author spending the first fifty pages of his new book in analysing terms, and otherwise preparing the way for real exposition? It is admirable as a model system of treating a subject, but it is a sharp criticism on the inadequacy of language.

Now what may be called solid thought is usually supposed to be easy of expression ;

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that is, words are sufficiently numerous and comprehensive in meaning to set forth the ideas in the writer's mind. For instance, the late Professor Huxley could use the English language with admirable effect, even when dealing with the most difficult subjects ; indeed, his expositions are classics of their kind. But when this has been granted there remains the fact that much of modern philosophic thought—Hegelianism in particular—is too deep for the resources of language, and well might Hegel say, “Only one man has understood me, and he has misunderstood me.” Profound thoughts and exalted emotions, these put our speech to the test ; but as pure literature is the subject of these pages, we will deal with language in relation to its power of arousing feeling and imagination. Let us begin with an opinion from Goethe. “We never sufficiently consider that a language is properly only symbolical, only figurative, and expresses objects never immediately, but only in reflection ; yet how difficult it is not to put the sign in place of the thing, always to keep the thing as it is before one's mind, and not annihilated by the expression !”

Symbol !—that is the very word. Perhaps it is a stumbling-block to the reader who has

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read fierce criticisms of French symbolists such as Mallarmé and Maeterlinck. But before joining in the condemnation of these men it may be just as well to listen to one whose name always calls for respect in matters relating to language. He says, "That language is not the instrument of thought in poetic invention has long ago been implied by one of the most popular of our poets. . . . The poet is found confessing that his thoughts present themselves to his mind in such a way as to require a separate and distinct labour to express them adequately in language. And when we come to examine some of the cases in which poets have written the most successfully, we shall find that it is very frequently not by the direct use of language; often by using language so as not even to convey any precisely intelligible direct meaning. Anything like precision and deliberate accuracy is felt to be antagonistic to our very conception of poetry. . . . And as it is a mark of the highest class of eloquence to fix the attention of the hearer on the subject of discourse, and not on the speaker or the language, so it is in poetry a mark of the highest skill to excite only emotion." \*

\* MAX MÜLLER, *Language and Poetry*.

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Nothing could be clearer as to the place which language occupies in the highest flights of literature ; but it is nothing more nor less than what is called symbolism—the name of which is sufficient to arouse hostile feelings in the minds of prejudiced people. A brief analysis, however, will soon make the position plain. Maeterlinck asserts that the clearest ideas of the mind can be expressed in language without much difficulty, but that the clearest ideas are, after all, only the ideas of the reason, the comprehending intelligence ; the greatest ideas, those that are fullest and deepest, can only be *indicated* by means of language. At this point Mallarmé continues the theory by affirming that in a poem there should be nothing but allusions—suggestions. The object should not be *named*, but words should be used in order to create a mental image and arouse a state of mind. It is claimed for this method that it makes the highest use of language, not the use which results in clear ideas, for clear ideas are the simplest and easiest ; but the use which serves to bring out suggestions of the illimitable and undefinable, the ideas of which are necessarily apprehensions rather than comprehensions.

The truth of these claims can easily be put



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to the test. Even Mr. Arlo Bates, who is avowedly an anti-Symbolist, so far as the school is concerned, confesses that "phrase by phrase, word by word, literature is a succession of symbols. The aim of the imaginative writer is constantly to excite the reader to an act of creation. He only is a poet who can arouse in the mind a creative imagination." \* Experience is too large, too deep, too high to be embodied in language; hence the poet uses words to suggest ideas, so that they will affect the imagination rather than be made clear to reasoning intelligence. But what about the *mot propre*? Did not Flaubert advise De Maupassant to search for the one word which alone could express his thought, and to search for it until he found it? And is not a writer's excellence to be found in the power he displays in manipulating words after this fashion? "Whatever the thing we wish to say there is but one word to express it, but one verb to give it movement, but one adjective to qualify it. We must seek till we find this noun, this verb, and this adjective, and never be content with getting very near it; never allow ourselves to play tricks, even happy ones, or have recourse to

\* *Talks on the Study of Literature*, p. 111.

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sleights of language to avoid a difficulty. The subtlest things may be rendered and suggested by applying the hint conveyed in Boileau's line—

‘D’un mot mis en sa place enseigna le pouvoir.’

(He taught the power of a word in the right place.)”\*

This is equally true in poetry and prose, but perhaps the prose writer aims at exactness of representation more often and more naturally than the poet; for the latter, as we have seen, desires to *suggest*; whilst the former is at greater pains to *describe*. Stevenson is frequently referred to as a good exemplar of what can be done with words in this connection. He himself says that his practice was to keep two books in his pocket—one to read, one to write in. “As I walked my mind was busy fitting what I saw with appropriate words. When I sat down by the roadside I would either read or a pencil and penny version-book would be in my hand to note down the features of the scene or to commemorate some halting stanzas.” In *The Silverado Squatters* he describes himself as carrying a pail of water up a hill, “the water *lipping* over the side, and a *quivering* sunbeam in the midst.” Are

\* DE MAUPASSANT, Preface to *Pierre et Jean*.

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not the italicised words just the words required?

In the following passage from Shakespeare notice how he takes a word from one set of associations and encompasses it with a set entirely new, the result being as striking as it is original—

“Ay, but to die and go we know not where,  
To lie in cold obstruction and to rot ;  
This sensible, warm motion to become  
A kneaded clod ; and the delighted spirit  
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside  
In thrilling regions of thick ribbed ice ;  
To be imprisoned in the viewless winds,  
And blown with restless violence round about  
The pendent world.”

Take the words *obstruction*, *kneaded*, *thrilling*, *viewless*, and *pendent*, and substitute other words—synonyms. Can you do that, and retain the vigour of the lines of which they form part? By no means. The word *pendent* is *the* word, because it sets forth so strikingly the position of our planet in space ; we feel instinctively that no better word could be used.

Thus, every great writer possesses language-power in a high degree. Bunyan possessed it in the Saxon purity and simplicity of his style. Walter Pater possessed it in the

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ability with which he could chisel his sentences into a cold but wondrous beauty. Swinburne shows it in his power of musical form, and Stevenson in his witchery of phrase. They have all mastered the relation between the word and the idea or feeling.

Language-power, whether of the dynamic or suggestive order, is only one feature of true literature. The finest feature of all is the sparkle of the writer's personality.

### **4. Literature and Personality.**

We have not yet reached the final stage of the question, "What is literature?" but in touching upon personality we come to the point where inquiry can proceed no further. Beyond the personality of the author it is impossible to go. Moreover in personality is found that inscrutable something which gives distinction to a writer and places his work in the front rank. To quote the oft-repeated saying of Buffon, "The style is the man." Goethe confessed that personality is everything in art and poetry. Perhaps no pleasanter account of this fact could be found than in the words of an American critic. "Is it not true that, in literature proper, our interest is always in the writer

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himself—his quality, his personality, his point of view? We may fancy that we care only for the subject-matter; but the born writer makes any subject interesting to us by his treatment of it, or by the personal element he infuses into it. When our concern is primarily with the subject-matter, in the fact or the argument, or with the information conveyed, then we are not dealing with literature in the strict sense. It is not what the writer tells us that makes literature, it is the way he tells it, or rather, it is the degree in which he imparts to it some rare personal quality or charm that is the gift of his own spirit, something which cannot be detached from the work itself, and which is as vital as the sheen of a bird's plumage, as the texture of a flower's petal. In other words, that which makes literature in all its forms—poetry, fiction, history, oratory—is personal and subjective, in a sense and to a degree that which makes science, erudition, and the like is not. There is this analogy in nature. The hive bee does not get honey from the flowers; honey is a product of the bee. What she gets from the flowers is mainly sweet water or nectar; this she puts through a process of her own, and to it adds a minute

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drop of her own secretion, formic acid. It is her special personal contribution that converts the nectar into honey. In the work of the literary artist common facts and experiences are changed and heightened in the same way." \*

Against this it is said that if the writer's personality is everything we should never be able to appreciate a poem or a novel issued anonymously. The objection is superficial, even frivolous. The personality referred to is not necessarily that of the man as a conversationalist, a friend, or a public character; it is personality as revealed in literature, "that quality of mind which makes the writings of Burke rank above those of Gladstone, Ruskin's criticism rank above that of Hamerton, Froude's histories above Freeman's, Renan's *Life of Jesus* above that of Strauss'; which makes the pages of Goethe, Coleridge, Lamb, literature in a sense that the works of many able minds are not."

It may be admitted that literature has beauties apart from the personality of the author. For instance, technique is quite an impersonal affair, but after all technical accuracy in a poem does not make it poetry. A

\* JOHN BURROUGHS in *The Atlantic Monthly*, March, 1899.

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sentence may be quite correct in grammar, but it is not necessarily the embodiment of a great idea; in fact, it may convey a foul suggestion or one that is perfectly unmoral. In like manner there are volumes of poetry and works of fiction that are models of literary technique, but because they lack *soul* they are never classed as literature.

It is here that man appears as a "maker" in the Greek sense, and a creator like unto God.

He takes the materials of life and fuses them together into new and fascinating unities; he creates the light that never was on sea or land; he gives being to the creatures of his imagination and makes them real people possessed of personality like himself; and he suffuses his whole work with the soul that separates him from his fellows, and which places him in the ranks of genius.\*

### 5. Literature and History.

The student who would understand the course of English literature must also under-

\* In connection with this subject of personality the reader would do well to give some attention to the theories laid down in Posnett's *Comparative Literature*, pp. 57-72.

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stand the course of English history—perhaps I ought to say of European history—for there is the closest connection between the two. To use a hackneyed phrase, every author is the child of his age, and his works will bear more or less the stamp of the period in which he lived. Literature is not an other-worldly product, in spite of its idealising of life, for even the theologian betrays his epoch in allusion, in style, and in the general drift of his teaching. How, for instance, can we understand the works of Chillingworth unless we have some acquaintance with the contemporary religious life? or appreciate the biting sarcasms of Butler's *Hudibras* without a knowledge of Royalist and Roundhead? It is impossible.

Now this department of investigation into literary forces is often called the "philosophy of literature," but the phrase is misapplied. What is really meant is the natural history of literature—those underlying agencies which contributed, sometimes to progress and sometimes to retrogression, and which are responsible for the condition of English literature as it is. I propose to make a brief inquiry into one or two of these agencies by way of illustrating the subject.



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A rough classification of influences which have gone to form English literature is: (1) those that have come from without and (2) those that have been evolved from within. Prominent among the first, indeed the very first, is the classic poetry and prose of Greece and Roman Italy. For convenience' sake we will take the writers of Roman Italy who in their turn had imbibed the best of Grecian thought and learning. I cannot do better than use the words of Mr. Churton Collins: "Almost all our didactic poetry is modelled on the didactic poetry of Rome, sometimes directly, as in the *Essay on Translated Verse*, the *Essay on Poetry*, the *Essay on Criticism*, *Cider*, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, *The Art of Preserving Health*, and the innumerable poems of which in their turn these became the patterns; sometimes indirectly, as in such poems as Daniel's *Musophilus* and *Philoscopus*, as Davies' *Nosce Teipsum*, as Fulke Greville's *Treatises*; nay, it may be questioned whether without *De Rerum Naturâ* we should have had, in the form in which it now stands, the *Excursion*. One important branch of our lyric poetry springs directly from Pindar; another important branch directly from Horace; another, again,

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directly from the choral odes of the Attic dramatists and Seneca. Our heroic satire from Hall to Dryden, from Dryden to Pope, and from Pope to Gifford; and Byron is simply the counterpart, often, indeed, a mere imitation, of Roman satire. The noblest moral poem in our language owes to Juvenal its suggestion, its inspiration, its method, and its style; again, the epistles which fill so large a space in the poetical literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries derived their origin from Horace. From the *Epistles* of Horace, too, flow the *Religio Laici*, the *Essay on Man*, the *Moral Essays*, and the poems which are in the estimation of Sainte-Beuve the most charming and the most precious of Cowper's contributions to our poetry. . . . Backward to the *Æglogues* of Barclay in the early part of the sixteenth century, forward to English *Idylls* of Lord Tennyson in the present, at whatever period in its history, from whatever point of view we contemplate this important branch of our poetry, we must contemplate it with reference to its source in Sicily and Italy." \*

What is true in poetry is true of prose.

"The history of English eloquence com-

\* *The Study of English Literature*, pp. 74-6.

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mences from the moment when the Roman classics moulded and coloured our style—when periodic verse modelled itself on Cicero and Livy, when analytic prose modelled itself on Sallust and Tacitus. From Wyatt to Hooker, from Hooker to Milton, from Milton to Bolingbroke, and from Bolingbroke to Burke, Johnson, and Gibbon, this has been the case. The structure of their periods—allowing, of course, for differences of idiom—the evolution of their periods, their rhythm, their colouring, their tone, are, when they rise to eloquence, precisely those of rhetorical Roman prose.”\*

At this point the student who does not know the classics raises a grave question, Can I not enjoy English literature without a primary study of Greek and Latin authors? Yes; it is quite possible to enjoy it, but there is a difference between enjoying it and thoroughly understanding it. Thus Cowper is a favourite poet with many people who really appreciate him; and yet some of these people have never read a page of Horace. In like manner one can delight in Milton's *Samson Agonistes* even though we have left Greek tragedy severely alone. But, after all,

\* *Ibid.*, p. 77.

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the difference is one between the positive and the superlative; it is good to read English classics irrespective of their remote though cogent origins; it is by far the best to study every great production in the light of previous works of similar character. All history is continuous, and literary history is therefore no exception to the rule.

Another force which has worked in the formation of English literature is the influence exerted by geographical position. Had this country been joined to the mainland of the Continent as Denmark is joined to Germany, it would have altered the course of our history, and with a change in history there would have been a change in the type and quality of our literature. It needs a prophet to be able to state what changes might have taken place in politics, and all the affairs of the nation, by assuming the existence of a narrow isthmus instead of the Straits of Dover; and in like manner it is hard to prophesy the probable differences effected in literary history. At any rate, we do know that our isolation made us a nation before we could otherwise have attained such a destiny, and with the coming of national unity there came a real native literature—independent, original, and

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expressive of the national feeling. Chaucer was the first literary Englishman, and although continental influences are easily discernible in the style and contents of his *Tales*, he is emphatically an Angelman—a son of the new nation formed by the union of Briton, Saxon, and Norman.

Thus in some respects insularity is a blessing; in other respects it is a curse, for it has retarded development by inducing a national egotism which is not always consonant with fact. Had we been in closer touch with continental forces we might have reaped much earlier the benefits of literary movements which we were too slow to recognise.

The one author who has treated English literature as a natural production is Taine, and to his work the reader must be referred for additional information as to the influence of environment. Professor Bascom's *Philosophy of English Literature* is also a brief and suggestive study of the whole question of cause and consequence in literary evolution.

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### 6. Literature and the Ideal.

In a previous section we have dealt with literature and art, and since all art is an expression of the ideal, I propose now to examine the particular service which literature renders to the interest, the happiness, and the interpretation of life. This service has been thus stated by John Morley: "The great need in modern culture, which is scientific in method, rationalistic in spirit, and utilitarian in purpose, is to find some effective agency for cherishing within us the ideal; that is, I take it, the business and function of literature."\* It would be difficult to find a better exposition of what literature is intended to do than that of Hegel in his *Æsthetik*. His words are applicable to art in general and literature in particular. "It is its object and aim to bring within the circle of our senses, perceptions, and emotions everything which has existence in the mind of man. Art should realise in us the well-known saying, '*Nihil humani a me alienum puto.*' Its appointed aim is to awake and give vitality to all slumbering feelings, affections, and passions; to fill and expand the heart, and

\* *On the Study of Literature*, p. 18.

## LITERATURE AND THE IDEAL

to make man, whether developed or undeveloped, feel in every fibre of his being *all* that human nature can endure, experience, and bring forth in her innermost and most secret recesses ; *all* that has power to move and arouse the heart of man in its profoundest depths, manifold capabilities, and various phases ; to garner up for our enjoyment whatever, in the exercise of thought and imagination, the mind discovers of high and intrinsic merit, the grandeur of the lofty, the eternal, and the true, and present it to our feeling and contemplation. In like manner to make pain and sorrow, and even vice and wrong become clear to us ; to bring the heart into immediate acquaintance with the awful and terrible, as well as with the joyous and pleasurable ; and lastly, to lead the fancy to hover gently, dreamily, on the wing of imagination, and entice her to revel in the seductive witchery of its voluptuous emotion and contemplation. Art should employ this manifold richness of its subject-matter to supply on the one hand the deficiencies of our actual experience of external life ; and on the other hand to excite in us those passions which shall cause the actual events of life to move us more deeply, and awaken our

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susceptibility for receiving impressions of all kinds." \*

These are the reasons why literature is great, why we study it, and why it possesses immortality. It reveals us to ourselves and to each other ; it supplies a bond of sympathy which is above all earthly distinctions, and addresses us as human beings, altogether ignoring the separating tendencies of race and language ; but most of all it speaks to the race of the ideal as opposed to the real, the unseen as opposed to the seen, and of that which endures when fleeting things are gone for ever. Well might Matthew Arnold say—

“ Art still has truth,  
Take refuge there.”

### B. SPECIMEN STUDIES IN OUTLINE.

1. In order to prosecute these studies in a methodical manner it is necessary to adopt a plan which can be followed out in the analysis of any work of literary art. This plan will be found in Professor W. H. Crawshaw's *Interpretation of Literature*, a book which

\* From LEWES'S "Inner Life of Art," in his *Principles of Success in Literature* (Scott Lib.).



## SPECIMEN STUDIES

ought to be in the hands of every student. It is full of acute analysis clearly and accurately stated. The chief fault lies in its placing the study of form before the study of substance, and as the point is important I propose to deal with it at once. He says: "The order of literary study naturally reverses the order of literary creation. The writer must proceed from substance to form; the reader meets the external form first, and naturally proceeds from the outward to the inward, from form to substance" (p. 85). With this we must entirely disagree. Literature is addressed to soul first, and to the critical intellect afterwards. When Wordsworth looked at a flower it suggested thoughts that lie too deep for tears; when the botanist examines one it is a thing of stamens and petals, and belongs to a certain order. We need both poet and botanist to complete our knowledge, but we have no hesitation in placing the poet's estimate first. In like manner the beauty and ideality of a poem or a drama are the chief qualities which claim a primary attention; metre, style, dialogue, and other matters should take a secondary place. Of course, it is said that Professor Crawshaw's outline is for the study of plays

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or poems that we know already—*Hamlet*, for example. Even then the fault still remains, for if a student has gone through *Hamlet* seventy times without realising the inner influences of the play—the esoteric as distinct from the exoteric—he has completely missed the mark. Consequently I have taken the liberty to adapt such outlines as are here reproduced in order to suit the order of procedure here advocated.

One danger needs a word or two of warning. It is very easy to make literary study a fetich by judging every work after a dogmatic form. Now these outlines are not dogmatic in any sense; they are simply hints or suggestions which the student may find it useful to act upon when he proposes to analyse systematically a single volume, or a number of works by one author. Literary appreciation, as will be shown in a later chapter, is largely subjective, not the result of measurement by an objective standard.

## THE STUDY OF A DRAMA

### 1. Hints on the Study of a Drama.

#### SHAKESPEARE'S *HAMLET*.

The best edition to use is that of Mr. E. K. Chambers, a volume of *The Warwick Shakespeare*, under the general editorship of Dr. C. H. Herford, whose aim is "to present the greater plays of the dramatist in their literary aspect, and not merely as material for the study of philology or grammar."

Let the student first read the play through—sympathetically—and giving himself up to the author's leading. After this he should read the editor's Introduction, and again go through the text, making use of the notes at the end of the book. He will then be prepared for an analysis, according to the following plan :—

#### I. THE STUDY OF SUBSTANCE.

##### A. BEAUTY.

1. Beauty in the characters.
2. Beauty in the representation of human life.
3. Beauty in the plot.
4. The kind of beauty.
5. The unbeautiful element.

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### B. IDEALITY.

1. General notion of the main ideal conception.
2. The human element.
  - (a) The dramatic picture of life.
  - (b) The particular section of life portrayed.
  - (c) Character relations, as shown by character groupings.

## II. THE STUDY OF FORM.

### A. STRUCTURE.

1. Acts and scenes.
2. Dialogues and dialogue groups.
3. Lyric element and alternation of prose and verse.

### B. METRE.

### C. STYLE.

1. Adaptation of the style to the characters.
2. Alternation of prose and verse.
3. Qualities manifested.
4. Relative importance of these qualities.

*Note.*—It must not be supposed that every drama contains all the elements here referred to. For instance, there is no alternation between poetry and prose in *Samson Agonistes*; but Professor Crawshaw endeavoured to draw up a plan which would be applicable to the study of every kind of drama. This plan, too, should be regarded in the light of the general table to be found on pages 80 and 81 of *The Interpretation of Literature*.

## THE STUDY OF A POEM

### 2. Hints on the Study of a Poem.\*

#### BROWNING'S *ABT VOGLER*.

It will be of some advantage to possess Mrs. Sutherland Orr's *Handbook*. Mr. Arthur Symons's *Introduction* is useful, but not of such compass and insight as Professor W. J. Alexander's (U.S.A.). Perhaps the most serviceable work for reference is the *Transactions of the Browning Society*. *Abt Vogler* is classified as one of the poet's best lyric utterances, and after studying it without assistance of any kind, the student may profitably seek the help of the above reference books and of the following plan of analysis :—

#### I. THE STUDY OF THE SUBSTANCE.

##### A. BEAUTY.

1. Beauty in the main ideal pictures of the work.
2. Beauty in the minor details of substance.
3. The kind of beauty.
4. The unbeautiful element.

##### B. IDEALITY.

1. The main ideal symbol or conception.
2. Minor ideal conceptions.
3. Relation of the various conceptions.
4. The real element.
  - (a) Thought and emotion.
  - (b) External realities.

\* Mr. H. C. BEECHING'S *Two Lectures Introductory to the Study of Poetry* should be carefully read.

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### II. THE STUDY OF FORM.

#### A. STRUCTURE.

1. Structure of song, ode, sonnet, etc.
2. Stanzas and stanza-groups.

#### B. METRE.

#### C. STYLE.\*

### 3. Hints on the Study of a Novel.

#### THOMAS HARDY'S *A PAIR OF BLUE EYES*.

I have selected this novel because it is full of beautiful workmanship and is therefore an excellent model for study. Lionel Johnson's *The Art of Thomas Hardy* is a good book to have near at hand. It may be said that a novel is meant to be read and enjoyed, not to be "studied." The objection is superficial. A novel is a work of art just as much as a poem or a play, and has the same elements in its composition and is susceptible to the same analysis. This analysis may be pursued in the following manner :—

#### I. THE PLOT.

1. Its originality.
2. Its inevitableness.

\* See note on p. 46.

# THE STUDY OF AN ESSAY

## II. THE CHARACTERS.

1. Their originality as persons.
2. Their groupings.
3. Their relation to each other.
4. Character contrasts.
5. What each is intended to bring out.

## III. ARTISTIC POWER

In describing persons, scenes, and events.

## IV. LITERARY QUALITIES.

1. Grammar.
2. Sentences and paragraphs.
3. Structural technique.

## V. THE UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHY.

### 4. Hints on the Study of an Essay.

R. L. STEVENSON'S *VIRGINIBUS PUERISQUE*.

The selection of this volume of essays for analysis needs no apology. Robert Louis Stevenson had the two great qualities of a writer of the first order : a striking personality and a wonderful gift of expression. Should the student need a handbook that may help him in his work he can safely use Professor W. T. Brewster's *Studies in Structure and Style*, in which there is a critical examination of a chapter from *The Amateur Emigrant*. For general purposes, however, the suggestions

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contained in Mr. Punchard's *Helps to the Study of Leigh Hunt's Essays* and the adoption of the following outline will suffice :—

### A. THE STUDY OF SUBSTANCE.

1. The personal flavour.
2. The ideal conception.
3. The kind of beauty.
4. The dominant emotion.
5. The central thought.

### B. THE STUDY OF FORM.

1. The style. Intellectual, emotional, imaginative, and æsthetic qualities.
2. The structure. Sentences, paragraphs, and unity.



## CHAPTER III.

### PRACTICAL HINTS

**I**N this chapter I propose to sketch a few suggestions as to practical means that may be adopted in studying English literature. Some of them may be found useful, others will be superfluous to a certain class of reader ; but all of them are, I think, of sufficient intrinsic value to bear an insertion in these pages, and where possible I have added expository passages from authorities whose names will carry respect.

- 1. Let every Student make it his duty to get a General View of the Course of English Literature from A.D. 670 to the Present Time.**

Having spoken previously of the evil of merely reading histories of the subject, I hope this counsel will not be misunderstood. What I mean is not a "bird's-eye view," consisting of a list of names, dates, and titles of

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books, but the perusal of a little manual such as Stopford Brooke's shilling primer, so deservedly popular. "Had I my way," says Professor Dowden, in his *New Studies in Literature*, "had I my way in the teaching of English literature, I would have the student start with a general sketch of European literature somewhat resembling Mr. Freeman's *General Sketch of European History*. . . . Such a general sketch of European literature I would fix once and for all as an outline map in the brain of the young student. It is essential that he should conceive the history of English literature as part of a larger movement." It follows from this that it is alike essential for the student not to commence with individual authors chosen at random, but to obtain a general idea of English literary progress from the beginning by going through an authoritative history. The process is much after the manner of a man who is about to take a journey to the East. He purchases a map and some guide-books, and makes himself familiar with the names of places on the way, especially the ports of call. He prepares himself for the voyage in a score of different ways, and becomes wise enough to expect both surprises and disappointments. Now a

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history of literature is a handy guide-book written to tell the traveller all about the journey he will have to take. The reading of it will whet his appetite with keen expectancy, and contribute largely to the quality and extent of his enjoyment when he actually treads the country in which genius once lived or studies the work which genius produced.

### **2. The First Duty of a Student is to Read a Classic right through Without Assistance of any kind in the shape of Notes and Glossaries.**

The reason for this is not far to seek. Turn back to the section dealing with "What is Literature?" Was it not made plain that real literature moved us by an appeal to the feelings as distinct from the literature of knowledge which appeals to the intellect? That being so, the spiritual message of a classic cannot be appreciated if the student stops every now and again to look up a word, or consult a note, or compare some sentiment with a similar one in a kindred poem. As Professor Corson says, he *must study details last*. "To begin with details, as is often (in the schools generally) done, requires that they be studied *per se*, and such study must be

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utterly 'vain and impotent,' so far as their relationship to the whole structure is concerned. Details are lifeless considered apart from 'the atmosphere that moulds and the dynamic forces that combine.' " \* Suppose the reader takes up *Hamlet* in a plain edition. By a plain edition I mean one which contains the text alone. He reads on until he comes to the words—

"When yond same star that's westward from the pole."

On the principle of doing a thing "thoroughly" he pauses here to inquire what the "d" is doing in "yond." After satisfying himself on this point he will next spend some minutes in finding out what a "sledged pole-axe" means; and if he passes by the reference to "brazen cannon," he is likely to give a little attention to the "skirts of Norway." Now an annotated edition would save him a great deal of time by supplying this information in notes at the bottom of the page or the end of the book; but the real time to consult such sources of information is on a *second* reading. The first reading should be given up to a general survey of the whole in order to get unity of impression, and catch

\* *Aims of Literary Study*, p. 29.

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the true spirit. How can this be done if we are to make little excursions afield into mythology, philology, history, and social customs? A fine poem is not first of all a specimen of language or a conglomeration of facts relating to theology, ethics, social observances, fables, and a host of other subjects—all of which are material for hours of investigation. These things are quite secondary. The poet's first concern was to utter his soul's emotion, and the reader's first duty is to feel it. Very often, perhaps I might say most often, literary study is pursued in the wrong way. I remember my own experiences in college class-rooms when we went through the *Faerie Queene*. The teacher, a philologist by the way, and an amusing enthusiast on Grimm's Law, got us through a couple of stanzas in an hour, and at the end of twelve months we had "analysed" a few cantos, but we never knew Edmund Spenser. I sometimes think of this class when I remember Professor Corson's words: "A teacher who has himself assimilated the informing spiritual life of a work of genius is not likely to be disposed to taper his instruction into the merely technical, still less to keep the minds of his students occupied with details, and

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these, too, considered apart from the general vitality to which they may contribute. But very many of those who conduct literary studies in the schools have not themselves assimilated the informing spiritual life of the works studied, and they are in consequence liable to become, by reason of the kind of study to which their unfitness obliges them to resort, mere Gradgrinds, who, like their prototype, Thomas the ironmonger, in Dickens's novel of *Hard Times*, are disposed even to disparage the subtle metal of the spirit with all its quickening power. With literature as a power they have nothing to do; its value with them consists in its furnishing material for various kinds of *drill* which deal with things quite apart from whatever constitutes the power of any work of genius." \* It is to be feared that in wisdom of this kind English teachers are a long way behind their American cousins.

### **3. Study Great Books and the Movements which Produced them.**

To study a book apart from its place in contemporary affairs is to miss an appreciable portion of its significance; hence five books

\* *Aims of Literary Study*, p. 27.

## GREAT BOOKS AND GREAT MOVEMENTS

thoroughly understood as the expression of one movement are as good as twenty books out of a list of "The Best Hundred." A few years ago it was the fashion to follow up the "Best Hundred Books" idea, but by this time there are not many people who guide their reading on this plan. It is perfectly obvious that the *best* in the world's literature cannot be gauged by so arbitrary a rule as that of a *number* selected haphazard, and just as obvious that the best for one individual is not the best for another. Moreover, as previously indicated, a book and an author are part and parcel of a definite world-movement, and it is difficult to exaggerate the importance of taking a full account of these three factors in their interrelations with each other. The method is thus described by Professor Dowden: "In the study of an individual author the inquirer as we have seen first investigates the peculiar nature of the author's genius, and then endeavours to develop it through successive stages; so here in the historical study of literature he will seek first to understand the leading characteristics of the age, and secondly, to follow the movement of the age, observing how it arose out of the past, how it culminated, how it prepared the way for a

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new epoch, and then declined. To know a period aright we must know its outward body and its inward spirit; we must study it in its actions, its passions, and its thought. What were its great achievements in the material world and its daily habits of social life? What were its dominating emotions? What were its guiding ideas? And, finally, is there any common element or principle which manifests itself alike in ideas, emotion, action? . . . I have ventured to assert that a profound interest in reality as opposed to abstractions, a rich feeling for concrete fact, was the dominant characteristic of the Elizabethan age." \*

With this as an object lesson the student cannot go astray. He will not conclude his survey of Walter Scott without inquiring into the "inward spirit" of the opening years of the last century; nor will he be surprised to find that subtle forces emanating from the Continent made their power felt beyond the Cheviot Hills. There is no better guide to the effects of the French Revolution than Professor Dowden himself.

Another illustration may be sought in an entirely different direction. It is a common-

\* *New Studies in Literature*, p. 445.



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place of literary history that "a critical period follows a creative period." "Of all men," says Professor Shairp, "it is true that they feel and energise first, they reflect and judge afterwards. First comes impulse, emotion, active outgoing; then reflection analysing the impulse and questioning the motive."\* What is true in the microcosm of the human mind is true in the macrocosm of the world, and after a period of great productiveness there comes a period of apparent stagnation when men busy themselves with analysing and valuing the works of a preceding age, or in other ways pursuing studies of a more critical than creative order. I do not mean to say that there is a law as exact and easily traceable as a natural law, but that there are certain features in the story of literature which go to show the reasonableness of prophesying a more or less intellectual epoch after one marked by spontaneity. Thus after the Shakespearian age of glorious splendour there came in vogue the "metaphysical poets," in whom ingenuity dominated over feeling, and "who laboured after conceits, or novel turns of thought, usually false, and resting on some equivocation of language or exceedingly

\* *Aspects of Poetry*, p. 37.

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remote analogy." After these writers came the really critical school of Dryden and Pope.

Now one object of that series of manuals edited by Dr. Herford, such as *The Age of Wordsworth*, *The Age of Dryden*, is to show important works in their natural setting of historic circumstance, political, social, religious, and literary. In this way the student of Dryden and Pope does not read the *Hind and Panther* and *The Essay on Man* as the productions of important writers merely, but as expressions of the spirit of the age. Carlyle frequently speaks of the "divine idea" of which literary men are the appointed interpreters. "For each age, by the law of its nature, is different from every other age, and demands a different representation of the divine idea, the essence of which is the same in all; so that the literary man of one century is only by mediation and re-interpretation applicable to the wants of another."\* Thus feudalism, monarchism, Protestantism, and Catholicism have each in turn had their respective periods, and each in turn their classic utterances in literature. *The Age of Wordsworth* just mentioned and Professor

\* *Miscellanies*, vol. i. p. 69.

## ENGLISH AND CONTINENTAL LITERATURE

Phelps's *English Romantic Movement* are good examples of the kind of study here recommended.

### **4. The Course of English Literature should be Studied in connection with Contemporary Movements on the Continent.**

Foreign influences have played a considerable part in the shaping of our literary history, and it is worth while putting them down in chronological and tabular form. Professor Dowden, in speaking of this matter, says most truly that it is essential the student should know where to find the headquarters of literature in each successive European period, "now in Florence or in Rome, now in Paris, now in London, now at Weimar. When Boccaccio is spoken of in relation to Chaucer, when Tasso or Ariosto is spoken of in relation to Spenser, or Boileau in connection with Dryden and Pope, or Goethe in connection with Carlyle, he ought at least to be able to place Boccaccio, and Tasso, and Ariosto, and Boileau, and Goethe aright in the general movement of European literature, and in some measure to conceive aright the relation of each to the literary movement in our own country."

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Let us take one of the latest of these outside influences as an illustration, that with which the name of Goethe is most prominently identified. This is concerned with what we may call creative criticism, the discovery of fruitful ideas relating to the values of literary productions. A hundred years ago we were actually blind to the superlative merits of some of our greatest writers—Shakespeare in particular; but there were one or two men in Germany who saw things in clearer light and committed their views to print—notably Lessing, in his *Dramaturgie* (1767). Goethe, Schlegel, and others followed in his steps, and their works were reviewed and popularised in this country by Thomas Carlyle, whose words we may pertinently reproduce in order to show the effect of German methods. “The problem is not now to determine by what mechanism Addison composed sentences and struck out similitudes, but by what far finer and more mysterious mechanism Shakespeare organised his dramas, and gave life and individuality to his Ariel and his Hamlet. Wherein lies that life? How have they attained that shape and individuality? Whence comes that empyrean fire which irradiates their whole being, and

pierces, at least in starry gleams, like a diviner thing into all hearts? Are these dramas of his not verisimilitudes only, but true—nay, truer than reality itself, since the essence of unmixed reality is bodied forth in them under more expressive symbols? What is this unity of theirs? and can our deeper inspection discern it to be indivisible, and existing by necessity, because each work springs, as it were, from the general elements of all thought, and grows up therefrom into form and expansion by its own growth? Not only who was the poet, but how did he compose? but what and how was the poem? and why was it a poem and not rhymed eloquence—creation, and not figured passion? These are the questions for a critic. . . . As an instance we might refer to Goethe's criticism of Hamlet. . . . This truly is what may be called the poetry of criticism; for it is in some sort also a creative art, aiming at least to reproduce under a different shape the existing product of the poet, painting to the intellect what already lay painted to the heart and the imagination."\* Over against this view of literary appreciation should be set the views represented by the *Edinburgh Review*

\* *Miscellanies*, i. pp. 60-72.

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with its now notable expression—"This will never do."

The following question set at a London University examination will show the importance of this section even from that point of view :—

"In what respects and with what justice has the Reformation in England been considered to have exercised an unfavourable influence on English literature and culture? Give examples."

As a sort of map to guide one's reading it would be difficult to find anything more useful than Professor Nichol's *Tables of Ancient Literature* (1877).

### **5. Study carefully those Writers who have Created a New Form of Literature, or Started a New Literary Movement.**

For instance, there is the novel. Who wrote the first English novel? The question depends on a definition of terms. If the word "novel" simply means narrative prose, we should have to go further back than 1740, which saw the publication of Richardson's *Pamela*, or even 1719, the year of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. But if the word means "a story wrought round the passion of love to a tragic or joyous conclusion," we must

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then begin with *Pamela*, and devote considerable time to its author.

There can be no more thorough-going method than that of Sainte-Beuve, as expounded by Professor Dowden.\*

That method is as follows :—

1. To pass from a particular book to the author's entire work, and so—
2. To the author himself.
3. Then to the author's family.
4. Group of friends and contemporaries.
5. The moment when the writer begins to decay, or decline, or deviate.
6. As seen through his admirers and enemies.
7. The result; the right word to describe his peculiar talent.

If the reader will follow out this plan in the case of Samuel Richardson, he will find himself occupied with one of the most interesting of literary studies; he will trace the influences of Richardson's humble origin and early experiences as contributory factors in the production of his works; his little tribe of feminine devotees, his maturity of years at the time he began to write, his moralising tendencies and his vanity—all these will come into the survey, in order to account in some measure for that rare insight into the human

\* *New Studies in Literature*, p. 393.

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heart as displayed in *Pamela* and *Clarissa Harlowe*.

The origins of a new literary movement always demand an exhaustive inquiry and delicate analysis. We are familiar with the phrase, "The return to nature," as set forth in the works of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and others.

What was the force which caused them to strike out in the direction of nature as compared with the artificiality of the age that immediately preceded them? Was the force in themselves?—or partly within and partly without? The answer to these questions will need to be sought for carefully, but the seeking carries with it its own unique pleasures.

We can do no more here than to indicate the possible lines of investigation. The primary question would have to decide what elements of originality were due to the Lake School of Poets, and how far their romanticism can be traced to Ramsay, Thomson, Collins, Gray and Goldsmith, Burns and Cowper. Following this should come an inquiry into social and political changes, as these would be likely to affect literature. The student will then be ready for a reading of



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Bowles's *Sonnets*, to which Coleridge expresses his extreme indebtedness for inspiration. In sending a copy to Mrs. Thelwall he said, "I entreat your acceptance of this volume, which has given me more pleasure, and done my heart more good, than all the other books I ever read, excepting my Bible." Here is one of the curious facts of literary history, for the *Sonnets* in question have no great literary merit, and their chief interest lies in the power they exerted over Coleridge, and afterwards over Wordsworth. Even then it was not poetic power; it was simply the suggestion of what possibilities lay concealed in the romantic method.

Thus by the accident of circumstances Bowles's *Sonnets* occupy a prominence in literature far beyond their intrinsic value; but if we reckon dynamic quality as a literary gift, we are bound to confess that William Lisle Bowles was a more original poet than critics are ready to allow.

We would commend therefore the systematic study of those writers who invented new forms of literary embodiment, and those who were responsible for the creation of new movements.

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### 6. An Intelligent Use of the Comparative Method will Illumine the Progress of Thought as expressed in Literature.

Occasionally a student meets a question like this in an examination paper, "Compare Lamb's critical method with that of any well-known critic of the present day." The question is a very proper one, and will soon test the quality of a man's reading—how far he has observed the growth of literary analysis, and with what insight he has looked into works that discuss literary values. Even though the above question may never have occurred to him previously, if he has studied his Lamb thoroughly, and knows anything at all of Matthew Arnold, he would not have much difficulty in writing an answer. But the best way is to study literature comparatively in a conscious manner. For instance, as literary criticism has been referred to, we will suppose that the student has just concluded a happy reading of Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* and Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry*. Instinctively he compares the two if for no other reason than their contiguity in his mind and their identity of subject. But it would be of inestimable advantage to his enjoyment

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and to his knowledge if to these books he would add Dryden's *Preface to the Fables*, Johnson's *Metaphysical Poets*, Coleridge's *Poetic Genius*, Wordsworth's *Prefaces*, Hazlitt's *Poetry in General*, and compare them together by observing their development in the chronological order of their appearance.

In this way one can treat of Carlyle's biographical and critical method as compared with that of Macaulay; how the comedies of Sheridan differ from those of Goldsmith, and the irony of Swift from that of Gibbon; or the means employed by Shakespeare to arouse the sense of horror as related to those used by Webster in his *Duchess of Malfi*.

Closely allied with this comparative idea of study is the topical reading of literature. Let the topic be *Ideal Commonwealths*. You turn to More's *Utopia*, then to Bacon's *New Atlantis*, next to Harrington's *Oceana*, and finally, to the works of Edward Bellamy. That the "literary study," as it is called, requires genuine investigation is one of its chief merits. If you are asked to compare the heroines of George Meredith with those of Thomas Hardy you are bound to know much more than a mere smattering of the books concerned, as well as to possess a keen

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insight into life and literary principle. Besides, the topical method is productive of an abiding interest in literature. Suppose the subject be "The Jew in Fiction and Drama." What exercise could be better than a comparison of Shakespeare's Shylock with Barrabas in Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*? Isaac in Scott's *Ivanhoe* with Mordecai in *Daniel Deronda*? and all of them with Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*?

Moreover, the "literary study" knows no defined limits, and if a student's proclivities are in the direction of minute analysis he will find sufficient scope in a suggestion like the following from Dr. D. G. Brinton :—

" . . . A study of the associations of colours with certain thoughts, moods, emotions, and states of mind, in Browning's poetry. Add a comparison with the deficient sense, or at least the deficient use of colour in the Greek poets, and draw a parallel between Browning in this respect and some of his contemporary poets; the chief aim being to ascertain if the poets exhibit any constant relation between certain colours and certain states of mind, and is such a relation one of cause or merely association?" \*

\* *Poet Lore*, vol. viii. p. 51.

## THE STUDY OF MYTHOLOGY

### 7. A Knowledge of Mythology is of first-rate Importance.

Every schoolboy picks up a certain amount of information respecting Greek and Roman gods and goddesses, but, unless the schoolboy develops into a classic scholar, such information is likely to be neither extensive nor accurate. Mythology is one of the most interesting of the byways of history, and one wonders why it is so seldom considered worthy of a special and separate study. "Enough for practical purposes" seems to be the criterion which guides the schoolmaster in his handling of this subject. And what, forsooth, are the "practical purposes?" They are, probably, the ability to "say something" about a fabled god who appears in a Royal Academy picture, or to whom reference is made in a new poem. But myths are too dignified for scrappy treatment on the plan of "practical purposes"; and although the student need not aim at acquiring the learning of Max Müller, he should at least aim at mastering the most important facts and theories. Undoubtedly this means a considerable tax on memory, but the subject possesses

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special interest, and this assists greatly in remembering names and events.

At this point the question arises, "What is the best way of studying mythology?" I have heard it said in reply, "Read the classics," or "read Max Müller and the works of Professor Cox." This advice is good so far as it goes, but it is not of much service to private students who have not had the advantages of a classical education. Certainly Professor Cox's *Catechism* is an admirable manual which amply repays a reading, especially to the beginner. But the real want is supplied by an American professor—Mr. C. M. Gayley—whose *Classic Myths in English Literature* is just the kind of work to place in the hands of those who wish to study myths intelligently. Professor Gayley has an introduction on "The Study of Mythology in connection with English Poetry," followed by chapters on "The Origin and Elements of Myth," their distribution and preservation. The body of the work analyses Indian, Greek, Roman, and Norse myths, and contains many useful portraits, maps, and chronological charts. Not the least helpful section is that devoted to what is called a "Commentary" and in order to give an

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impression of its utility, I quote the following :—

§ TEXTUAL.—*Cephalus*, the son of Mercury (Hermes) and Herse, is irretrievably confounded with Cephalus the son of Deïon and grandson of Æolus. The former should, strictly, be regarded as the lover of Aurora (Eos); the latter is the husband of Procris, the great-grandfather of Ulysses.

INTERPRETATIVE.—*Procris* is the dewdrop (from Greek *Prox*, dew) which reflects the shining rays of the sun. The “head of the day,” or the rising sun, Cephalus, is also wooed by Aurora, the Dawn, but flies before her. The Sun slays the dew with the same gleaming darts that the dew reflects, or gives back to him. According to Preller, Cephalus is the morning star beloved alike by Procris, the Moon, and by Aurora, the Dawn. The concealment of Procris in the forest and her death would then signify the paling of the moon before the approaching day. Hardly so probable as the former explanation.

ILLUSTRATIVE.—*Aurora*: Spenser, *F. Q.*, 1, 2: 7; 1, 4: 16; Shakespeare, *M. N. Dream*, 3: 2; *Rom. and Jul.*, 1: 1; Milton, *P. L.*, 5: 6, “Now Morn, her rosy steps in the eastern clime advancing,” etc.; *L’All.*, 19; Landor, *Gebir*, “Now to Aurora borne by dappled steeds, the sacred gates of orient pearl and gold. . . . Expanded slow,” etc. *Cephalus and Procris*, in Moore’s *Legendary Ballads*; Shakespeare, *M. N. Dream*, “Shafalus and Procrus”; A. Dobson, *The Death of Procris*.

IN ART.—*Aurora*: paintings by Guido Reni, J. L. Hamon, Guercino; “Procris and Cephalus,” by Turner; “L’Aurore et Céphale,” painted by P. Guérin 1810, engraved by F. Forster 1821.”

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In this way the reader can give mythology systematic treatment by first learning the known facts and the theories of interpretation, and then by tracing their representation in painting, poetry, and sculpture. "It goes without saying that a rational series of somewhat consecutive stories is more serviceable to the reader than a *congeries* of data acquired by spasmodic consultation of the classical dictionary—a mass of information bolted, as it were, but by no means digested. When, however, these stories are treated in genealogical and realistic sequence, and are illustrated by lyric, narrative, and descriptive passages of modern literature, there is furnished not only that material of allusion and reference for which the student nowadays trusts to meagre and disjointed text-book notes, but a potentiality which should render the general reading of *belles lettres* more profitable; for a previous acquaintance with the material of literary tradition heightens the appreciation of each allusive passage as it is encountered. It enables the reader to sympathise with the mood, and to enter into the purpose of the poet, the essayist, the novelist, and the orator." \*

\* *Classic Myths in English Literature.*



### 8. Find a definite place for **Literary Biography and Geography.**

Biographies of all kinds are almost as much read nowadays as fiction, and certainly literary biographies are numerous enough and of sufficient good quality to satisfy the most avaricious reader. Of course, there can be but few Boswells among modern biographers, partly because there are no personalities like Johnson, and partly because the Boswell style is out of keeping with present-day tendencies. But no student will neglect Lockhart's *Life of Walter Scott*, and works of a similar character, both on account of their intrinsic interest and the light they throw upon the origin of literary production and the action of literary forces.

The notable series of manuals edited by John Morley, and called "English Men of Letters," are accessible in cheap editions, contain the work of specialists, and have the merit of being brief. They are not biographies in the ordinary sense of the word—long, "windy," two-volumed editions of letters, most of which were not worth the cost of the compositor's time in setting up—but literary treatises on a literary man's life. The "Great

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Writers" series contains excellent accounts of many English authors.

Literary geography seems to be a study almost entirely neglected, at any rate on this side of the Atlantic. The Americans pursue it with characteristic ardour, and do not feel that their knowledge of Wordsworth is complete until they have explored the Wordsworth country, or that Dr. Johnson has a full appreciation until they have strolled down Fleet Street, "the finest walk in Europe," and visited "Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese."

It is difficult to exaggerate the helpfulness of a literary pilgrimage intelligently carried out. That it aids memory may be a mere utilitarian benefit; but if to a sense of the impressiveness of subject, as in Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," we add the impressiveness of the scene itself, we participate in influences of the utmost educational value. There are few people who are at all far remote from literary centres. The Yorkshireman has Haworth and the Brontës; the dweller in Somerset is not far from Stratford-on-Avon, and Clevedon is in his own county; the Lake Country is within easy distance of the populous Lancashire towns; and as for London, it literally teems with associations. Some day readers may

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catch a little more of the spirit of Mr. Lawrence Hutton, who in his "Landmarks" series has invested several cities with such delightful interest.

### **9. Literary Forms should receive Close Attention.**

The word "form" has several meanings, but in this connection it denotes, first of all the division of literary works into prose and poetry; and secondly, the many subdivisions into which each of these has developed in the course of a long history. The poem comes first in chronological order, and the student will find it necessary to pursue the study of poetry and poetical principles as complementary sides of one great subject. He will probably follow his own instincts as to what poets he will read after having devoted time to those who occupy high places in the esteem and veneration of the world; but although a knowledge of technical criticism is not requisite for every species of enjoyment, he is sure to discover that intelligent appreciation can only spring from an acquaintance with first principles. Moreover, if he aims at a scholarly insight into things, he is bound to know the history and scope of

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the epic as distinct from the lyric, and both of them as distinct from the drama. In fact, he must make up his mind to investigate the science of poetics and master thoroughly all that is signified by metre, rhythm, and accent. Hexameters, pentameters, iambic, choriambic, and dactyl may not form a pleasing terminology, but the difficulties are far more apparent than real. In this connection he will find Professor Gummere's *Handbook of Poetics* of great service as a technical manual, but he cannot afford to overlook the treatises of Puttenham, Sidney, Shelley, Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, Wordsworth, and Coleridge.

Prose, too, has its many forms of embodiment—greatly increased during the last century—and it may be a useful investigation for those who are philosophically minded to inquire what the next literary form will be, or whether we have exhausted all our possibilities in this direction. Below is a list of some of the chief methods of expression in poetry and prose—omitting the most obvious, *e.g.* the novel, the epic, the essay :—

Masques.	Interludes.	Mysteries.
Epithalamies.	Miscellanies.	Moralities.
Satires.	Ballads.	Allegory.

# 10. If necessary, adopt a System of Marking your Books.

You will observe I say, "If necessary." Many people would call it a wicked practice because it spoils the appearance of a book. Certainly if appearances weigh with you, there will be few marks in your editions of authors, especially when they rejoice in sumptuous bindings. But appearances do not weigh with everybody, neither is it necessary to spoil a book by marking it. I could not recommend the system of hieroglyphics suggested in Todd's *Students' Manual*; they are too "fearful" for anything. Still, markings of some kind are often exceedingly useful, and the simplest method is to draw a pencil-mark at the side of the passage you wish to note, and make an index of it on one of the plain pages at the end of the book. The index may be both simple and effective, as only the subject and page number are necessary. Thus in your edition of Browning you could insert a reference thus—

E | View of the nature of Evil | vol. i. p. 579.

—and so forth, right through the alphabet.

In this way you can dispense with a great

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deal of copying—should you be accustomed to use a commonplace book, which is an article you cannot well do without.

One point must not be forgotten. The contents of your commonplace book and the markings in the volumes on your shelves will be an indication of the progress of your taste and sense of discernment. By-and-by it will be evident that you marked many passages that had no special merit, and copied extracts that possessed no merit whatever.

## CHAPTER IV.

### LITERARY CRITICISM

CAN we tell a good book from a bad one? The question seems absurdly simple as thus stated; but not long ago Mr. Augustine Birrell addressed himself to the subject with sufficient gravity to warrant a satisfactory degree of complexity in an attempt to answer. Still, one would have thought that it was a very easy matter to distinguish a literary failure from a literary success, even when success is measured by the criterion of art and not by that of mere popularity. Evidently this is not the case, and when the present condition of criticism is inquired into perhaps we shall find small reason to wonder why. Excellence in literary productions is made to depend on so many points of view; critics disagree so conspicuously as to what are the chief merits of classic utterances; and we have so many fleeting fashions in literary taste that there is little to surprise us in the

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foregoing question.\* I hope, however, to make plain such principles as are commonly accepted and hazard a prophecy as to the future of criticism.

### 1. The Objective Standard.

1. There are two schools of criticism — that which judges matters from an objective standpoint, and that whose values are the outcome of personal impressions. The first school is almost extinct, and is exemplified in Addison's criticism of *Paradise Lost*. Let me give a summary as found in Mr. Basil Worsfold's capital little primer on *Judgment in Literature*: "Addison gives us the plan of his criticism of *Paradise Lost* in the last of the eighteen papers in the *Spectator* which he devotes to the subject. Four papers are assigned to the examination of the poem under the respective heads of Fable (or Plot), Characters, Sentiments, and Language; that is, to the four constituent elements of Aristotle's analysis of the tragedy which are present in an epic poem. Two papers are given to the 'censures which the author may incur under each of these heads,' and the

\* See Professor DOWDEN's article in the *Contemporary Review*, vol. for 1886.



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remaining twelve are devoted to a consideration of each of the twelve books of the poem in turn; and in this consideration he points out the 'particular beauties' which belong to each book, and tells 'wherein these beauties consist.' As the result of this examination he pronounces a general verdict of approval; but at the same time he indicates certain deficiencies. Milton, he says, 'excels in general under each of these heads.' On the other hand, he finds the 'plot' of *Paradise Lost* to be deficient in two respects. First, because 'the event is unhappy'; for Aristotle, while he says that the plot of a tragedy should terminate in a disaster, lays down the general rule that an epic should end happily. And secondly, because it contains too many 'digressions.'"

It should be said that although this gives us an idea of Addison's method it does not wholly represent his critical mind, since he remarks that Milton's blemishes are like "spots on the sun," and in his *Pleasures of the Imagination* has given evidence of an insight into the true method of criticism. As previously noted, the formal style of valuing a literary work is almost altogether out of fashion. Perhaps Professor Minto's

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*Manual of English Prose Literature* is one of the last of serious contributions to critical appreciation that partake of this style. His plan of analysis is to take the "Elements of Style," and under that head to deal with the vocabulary, the sentence, the paragraph, and figures of speech. Under the head of "Qualities of Style" he considers qualities that are intellectual and emotional, such as simplicity, clearness, strength, pathos, the ludicrous, melody, harmony, and taste. A third division is taken up with description, narration, exposition, and persuasion. It must be admitted that the Professor makes more out of his scheme than would appear on the surface, and some of his characters—De Quincey, for instance—are well done. But after all, the scheme itself belongs to rhetoric, and rhetoric is not literary criticism. Schemes are too mechanical for judging the expressions of literary feeling, and if proof is needed one has only to remember that the formal canons of an Edinburgh reviewer compelled him to say that Coleridge's *Christabel* was a mixture of raving and drivelling, and Wordsworth's great ode "most illegible and unintelligible."

The great weakness of objective criticism

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lies in the fact that the "rules" of what is good literature and what is not are derived from good literature itself. Euripides and Sophocles wrote their plays before Aristotle published his *Poetics*, and it was from great dramas that "the master of those who know" deduced his literary criticism. This is rather unfortunate for the "rules," as it gives every new creator the opportunity of presuming that the writing of a new kind of classic would result in the deducing of new rules to the detriment of the old ones. The position is made all the more acute when a novelist like Mr. George Meredith can produce good literature in spite of breaking nearly every canon of narrative art. Moreover, if literary criticism consisted in applying a fixed and unchangeable standard, why are critical opinions so diverse? Why did Goethe say that Dantë's *Inferno* was abominable and the *Paradiso* tiresome? or how could Matthew Arnold depreciate Rossetti? or Robert Louis Stevenson say he could not enjoy *Robert Elsmere*? In each case there are responsible judges who agree and some who disagree. This could not be so if literary valuation were as exact a process as the objective method supposes.

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Regarding the matter from a philosophical point of view, it must be confessed that there is solid truth in the assertion that "analysis, the method peculiar to science, is decried in literature because synthesis is the method peculiar to art." Personality is the essence of the literary spirit, and although every writer is more or less an item of the age in which he lives, sharing its life, and actuated by its ideas, as well as contributing to its fulness of being, no amount of analysis can compass the soul of genius, and at this point the scientific method comes to a sudden stop. Even Taine, that apostle of naturalism in literary studies, said of Shakespeare, "All came from within—I mean from his soul and his genius; external circumstances contributed but slightly to his development." \*

### 2. The Subjective Standard.

The second method of arriving at the difference between good literature and bad literature, or rather in apportioning merits and demerits in a literary production, is the subjective method. It depends almost entirely on the impression which a poem or a prose work makes on the mind of a critic, and—a most

\* *English Literature*, vol. i. p. 297.

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important addition—it depends on the insight and knowledge of that critic as to how much value we can attach to his “impressions.” This fact, however, does not militate against the “subjective view” itself. Indeed, Professor Dowden has confessed, with his usual candour, that “the best criticism of Shakespeare is not that which comes out of profound cogitation, but out of immense enjoyment; and the most valuable critic is the critic who communicates sympathy by an exquisite record of his own delights.”\* What is this but the much-belaboured impressionism of Jules Lemaître and Anatole France? The latter writer says his purpose in writing about the works of others is to discourse pleasantly of the adventures of his soul, as it ranges at large in the ample domain of books; and M. Brunetière, his doughty opponent, declares that if this be criticism there is no possibility of arriving at a definite conclusion as to the good or bad in literary art, and that these qualities are therefore just what we make them.

Before considering this reasonable objection it may be well to turn back to the definition of literature on a previous page. We saw

\* *Shakespeare: his Mind and Art*, p. 242.

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that the real interest of pure literature lay in the personality of a writer;\* we are not half so much interested in what he tells us as the way in which he tells it. Now there is a complementary truth in criticism. It is not the man who examines a poem and "ticks off" its beauties and defects in catalogue form who interests us; it is the man who gives us an account of his personal feelings, how and why he enjoyed reading the poem. As Henry James says, "Criticism is the critic." But there is a still deeper truth to be noticed. A great creative personality—Shakespeare, for instance—needs another great personality to accomplish effective interpretation. Pope speaks of a certain Mr. Rymer as being one of the finest critics of his day. And what was Rymer's opinion of *Hamlet*, of *Macbeth*, of *The Merchant of Venice*? He could not tolerate them, and said their author raved like a madman!

Exactly! It needs a Goethe or a Coleridge to criticise the Bard of Avon; only the supremely clever man can rightly appreciate the supremely clever thing. After that, when

\* "Art is valuable or otherwise, only as it expresses the personality, activity, and living perception of a good and great human soul."—*Stones of Venice*, vol. iii. ch. iv.

## THE SUBJECTIVE STANDARD

hidden beauties have been revealed, we all become appreciators in our turn. Listen to Wordsworth when he speaks in self-defence: "If there be one conclusion more forcibly pressed upon us than another by the review which has been given of the fortunes and fate of poetical works, it is this—that every author, as far as he is great, and at the same time *original*, has had the task of *creating* the taste by which he is to be enjoyed; so has it been, so will it continue to be. This remark was long since made to me by the philosophical friend for the separation of whose poems from my own I have previously expressed regret. The predecessors of an original genius of a high order will have smoothed the way for all that he has in common with them—and much he will have in common; but, for what is peculiarly his own, he will be called upon to clear and often to shape his own road; he will be in the condition of Hannibal among the Alps."\* Robert Browning likewise had to wait until he had created the taste for himself; the interpreting mind was slow to pronounce its verdict.

Mr. John Burroughs, in a luminous article called "Criticism and the Man," says that by a

\* *Essay Supplementary*, p. 87. A. J. George's ed.

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great critic "we mean a great mind that finds complete self-expression in and through the works of other men. Arnold found more complete self-expression through literary criticism than through any other channel. Hence he is greatest here; his theological criticism shows him to less advantage. . . . Criticism in its scientific aspects, or as a purely intellectual effort—a search for the exact truth, a sifting of evidence, weighing and comparing data, disentangling testimony, separating the false from the true, as with the lawyer, the doctor, the man of science, the critic of old texts and documents—is one thing; criticism of literature and art, involving questions of taste, style, poetic and artistic values, is quite another, and demands quite other powers. In the former case it is mainly judicial, dispassionate, impersonal; in the latter case the sympathies and special predilections are more involved. We seek more or less to interpret the imaginative writer, to draw out and emphasise his special quality and stimulus, to fuse and restate him in other terms; and in doing this we give ourselves more freely. We cannot fully interpret what we do not love, and love has eyes the judgment knows not of. What man was born to say, what he speaks



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out of his most radical self-hood—that the same fate and power in you can alone fully estimate and interpret.”\*

It is because real literature deals with a subjective view of the world that criticism must follow on the same subjective lines; objective standards can never reach the high altitudes of feeling, neither are they fitted to judge work which is the offspring of another and altogether distinct sphere of mental activity. The beauty of a poem or prose narrative is not a thing which can be worked out and demonstrated like a mathematical problem; it is a thing that we either feel, or do not feel,—without any attempt to discover it by elaborate processes. True, there are objective facts in every work of art: the accuracy or inaccuracy of the author's technique, his life and opinions in relation to his poetry, his formative influences, and matters of that kind—these are objective facts to be objectively treated. But the beauty, the passion, the imagination, and the subtle personality are all connected with the subjective world, and must therefore be treated in a subjective manner.

M. Ferdinand Brunetière is one of the

\* *Atlantic Monthly*, p. 346. September, 1899.

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strongest opponents of the subjective method of criticism, and it will be advisable to consider the chief objections he urges against the view adopted in this chapter.

Where, it is asked, is the true standard of literary merit if every man's impression is to be allowed the rank of a critical utterance? The true standard, we reply, is two-sided, objective and subjective; the merit of a poem from the former point of view can be determined by the science of poetics, and is therefore a matter about which there can be little difference of opinion; but the subjective merit—depth of passion, vigour of imagination, beauty of idea, and touch of sympathy—are only determined by the critic's capacity to receive and feel them. It follows that the value of a criticism is not an affair of knowledge, but of sympathetic insight, and the man who possesses this quality in the highest degree of sensitiveness is the greatest critic. The objective standards have varied but little since the day of Aristotle's *Poetics*, and the dramatist of to-day must still embody the unities in some form or other in his work; but the subjective view of things is ever changing and by the nature of things is bound to be in a state of "becoming." Now one of the

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tendencies of certain types of mind is the tendency to reduce everything to law and order and rule. To this class Brunetière and his disciples belong. They cannot allow critical opinions to remain in a state of perpetual flux : one man saying one thing, another man precisely opposite, and a third disagreeing with both. They strive for a fixed standard which shall be the same for all men, irrespective of race or period. The aim is quite natural, especially to minds of scientific build. They detest the possibility expressed in the lines—

“ All thoughts, all creeds, all dreams, are true,  
All visions wild and strange ;  
Man is the measure of all truth,  
Unto himself. All truth is change.” \*

But these lines are hyperbolic beyond the acceptance of any man who is not a Theosophist, and M. France would reject them as resolutely as M. Brunetière.

The fact remains, however, that critical judgments are, and always have been, as variable as the personalities from which they spring ; and as different as the personal views of the writers who are criticised. “ Behold how

\* See “ Brunetière and his Work as a Critic,” *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1897.

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Macaulay's verdicts differ from Carlyle's, Carlyle's from Arnold's, Arnold's from Frederic Harrison's, or Morley's, or Stephen's, or Swinburne's; how Taine and Sainte-Beuve diverge upon Balzac; how Renan and Arnold diverge upon Hugo; how Lowell and Emerson diverge on Whitman; and how wide apart are contemporary critics about the merits of Browning, Ibsen, and Tolstoi! Landor could not tolerate Dante, and even the great Goethe told Eckermann that Dante was one of the authors he was forbidden to read. In Byron's judgment, Griffiths and Rogers were greater poets than Wordsworth and Coleridge. The German Professor Grimm sees in Goethe 'the greatest poet of all times and all people,' which makes Matthew Arnold smile. Chateaubriand considered Racine as much superior to Shakespeare as the Apollo Belvidere is superior to an uncouth Egyptian statue. Every nation, says a French critic, has its chords of sensibility that are utterly incomprehensible to another. 'Many and diverse,' says Arnold, 'must be the judgments passed upon every great poet, upon every considerable writer.' And it seems that the greater the writer or poet, the more diverse and contradictory will be the judgments upon him.

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The small men are easily disposed of—there is no dispute about them ; but the great ones baffle and try us. It is around their names, as Sainte-Beuve somewhere remarks, that a perpetual critical tournament goes on.” \*

The fact is, Brunetière’s criticism is itself quite as subjective as that of any other man; his vigorous onslaughts are only manifestations of his personality—the expression of the type to which he belongs. No man can ever get away entirely from himself; his prejudices thrust themselves upon him whether he will or no; his training, his history, and his peculiarly personal experiences all conspire to affect his opinions in a particular way; and, if he be a man—one who dares to be true to himself—he will always speak according to that which is in him. From this standpoint Brunetière is a most impressive figure, and his opponents do not stamp themselves on our imagination with the same degree of significance. Still, truth must prevail apart from contending critics, and the fact that out of this battle of the standards there have now issued names everywhere recognised as great, would seem to show that before a creative

\* JOHN BURROUGHS, *Atlantic Monthly*, p. 344, September, 1899.

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genius can take his true place it is necessary for the different schools of criticism to appraise him according to their respective methods, until, long years after, a consensus of opinion establishes his claims beyond all possibility of dispute.

### 3. Suggestions for Study.

The beginner who wants a rapid and effective survey of the whole subject should read Mr. W. B. Worsfold's *Judgment in Literature*; after which he will be prepared for Vaughan's *English Literary Criticism*. Some would advise him to commence with Aristotle's *Poetics* and Lessing's *Laocoön*, but they are too technical, the latter especially, for one who is making a commencement in reading the literature of criticism. Crawshaw's *Interpretation of Literature* forms a valuable guide to the purely technical elements and their relation to criticism. It ought to be much better known than it is. Professor C. T. Winchester's *Some Principles of Literary Criticism* is one of the best treatises on general lines that has come from America, just as Professor Gayley's *Introduction to Literary Criticism* is the fullest from the point of view of technics.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Of course, we must not forget our own standard English writers. These are dealt with in some measure by Professor Vaughan, but we are deficient in handbooks, such as those just mentioned.

The finest education, however, is not obtained from manuals: it is obtained from reading the best literature; and it is good practice to know how others have done this before us, by reading the result of their labours. Hence, De Quincey's *Literary Criticism*, Walter Bagehot's *Literary Studies*, Leslie Stephen's *Hours in a Library*, Professor Dowden's *Transcripts and Studies*, *Studies in Literature*, and *New Studies* will be eagerly devoured.

Mr. John Morley's *Miscellanies* will afford a good introduction to the works of Sainte-Beuve, and Taine's *English Literature* is a classic that no one can possibly pass by. Yetta Blaze de Bury's *French Literature of To-day* is a series of essays showing the latest modes of criticism in France, and should be read prior to reading Brunetière, Anatole France, and Lemaître.

Goethe's *Conversations with Eckermann* one never wearies of consulting. *Questions at Issue* and *Critical Kit-Kats*, by Edmund

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Gosse, *Corrected Impressions*, by George Saintsbury, *Essays Speculative and Suggestive*, by J. Addington Symonds, *Obiter Dicta*, by Augustine Birrell, and *Studies in Two Literatures*, by Arthur Symonds, are among the latest contributions to literary valuation.



## CHAPTER V.

### ENGLISH LITERATURE IN PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS

#### 1. The Evils of the Exam System.

IN a previous section I have ventured to say something in reference to the way in which English literature figures in University, Civil Service, and other examinations. With few exceptions, the examination questions place a premium on the man with a good memory, whilst the man with a memory less good, but who possesses real literary discernment, has few chances of doing justice to himself. Until the ideal of the examiner is changed by being purged of its overplus of philology and bald fact, this state of things is likely to last for some time to come. It can hardly be the fault of the student if he crams for his "final," or the Civil Service candidate for the "India Civil." The *system* is to blame. How can a youth of twenty-one be expected

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to know the whole story of English literature, its chief epochs, its representative writers in every department of practice, their chief works and dates of publication? How can he take this subject as one among many without resorting to methods which examiners decry, but for which they are themselves responsible? Let the reader take a specimen Civil Service examination paper for a Class I. Clerkship, and scrutinise it carefully. He will generally find, among other questions, a long list of quotations which are to be identified as to their authorship and the books in which they appear. What does the student do? He knows one of two things must be done: either he must read the chief works of all important authors from Beowulf to Browning, or else resort to a "quote" book, or a "coach" who will supply him with a list of notable passages from the masterpieces and show him how to "get them up." Of course, he chooses the latter method for obvious reasons; it is, in fact, the only possible method where the candidate must be ready in a given time.

Nothing could be more derogatory to real study than cramming of this kind, but so long as the modern examination system lives—and it shows no signs of dying yet—so long will

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students be compelled, more or less, to play to the examiners' gallery.

In this chapter, therefore, I am attempting to steer a middle course between the true ideal as previously defined and the cynical cramming which aspires to nothing more than a high score in "marks." My justification for a compromise must be found in the fact that in some examinations the possibility of success, and consequently the possibility of earning a living, depends on the number of marks, English literature being a necessary subject.

### 2. A Plan of Study.

1. There is a distinct art in answering the questions of an examiner, let the subject be what it may. He wants a certain series of facts stated as clearly and briefly as possible. No other facts, however closely related to those asked for, will serve his purpose, and it only angers him to see an attempted imposition. A student who is going to sit for an examination should, therefore, accept the inevitable and prepare his subject in such a way that its data will be as handy as possible. English literature stored away in the "pigeon-hole and compartment" fashion is artificial

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enough in all conscience, but a candidate who is called upon to write down within the space of an hour or two answers to questions bearing on literary history from Bede to the present day has no time to go a-seeking; he must have his facts mentally handy, or, to change the figure, within arm's length ready for instant use.

First of all, then, he should firmly grasp the great periods and their subdivisions, as well as the terms that are used to denote them. In spite of differences among authorities as to what these periods are, the divisions adopted by Shaw, in his *Manual of English Literature*, are comprehensive enough to serve as a safe guide to the beginner.

- I. *Old English*, from 1250 to 1350 A.D.
- II. *Middle English*, from 1350 to 1550 A.D.
- III. *Modern English*, from 1550 A.D. to the present day.

After this come the subdivisions, which should embrace (1) great names; (2) great books; (3) the chief social and political events and their effect upon literature; (4) a list of dates marking the foregoing facts; and (5) such critical notes on the period as may be found necessary and helpful.

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The aim of a map of literary knowledge arranged in this manner is purely utilitarian, namely, to give the candidate easy mental access to a date, an author, a title, a movement, a quotation, or a critical judgment. This will entail very considerable labour, especially if it be done conscientiously; but of the value of such a map to the prospective examinee there can be no question. It will give him much more than a bird's-eye view of literature by showing the *progression* of letters from Chaucer to modern times.

But after all, a map is a map and nothing more; what the student needs is the study of the classics themselves. He must not be content with the comments of the historian and know nothing of Pope's *Dunciad* other than that which he finds in Craik, or Taine, or a book of "Typical Selections."

Before me is a question set at a Civil Service examination asking for the authors, the context, also title of books and date of publication, of thirty poetical quotations. How should a question like this be prepared for? By studying the best English poetry. Some students, however, pressed for time, will "get up" Dryden from a Dryden *anthology*, and are not above revising Shakespeare by a

perusal of Dodd. Probably they are as ashamed of the process as they are eager to pass the examination. It is at this point that the map should be consulted and those books *studied* (and ample notes made) which occupy the chief places. Thus in the age of Chaucer not only will the works be read which show the poet's Romantic and Renaissance tendencies, but Wycliffe, Gower, Mandeville, and others will claim a share of attention.

Some idea of the way this information should be planned may be obtained from H. J. Nicoll's *Landmarks of English Literature*. The volume has value beyond its plan, but its plan is the item which most concerns us here. I do not say the plan is perfect and a model of its kind, but it is suggestive, and for that reason worthy of consultation. Mr. F. Ryland's *Chronological Outlines of English Literature* is much more scholarly and sounder in every way. The author is an experienced tutor, and knows how to serve his facts in the form that students require them. His volume should always be at hand.

## HOW TO DEAL WITH QUESTIONS

### 3. How to Deal with Questions.

2. The candidate has now seen his subject from the distance ; its general scope is familiar to him, and the chief names and dates are no longer strange sounds to his ear. The time has now come for closer study, and he must leave the larger historical view for the work of treating authors individually. How is this to be done, bearing in mind the special needs of an examination ? In addition to following out, as far as possible, the special hints given in a preceding section, he should make a careful study of a series of specimen questions in order to know the points on which an examiner expects him to be well informed. Having assured himself that he has mastered the scope, the method, and the minutiae of examiners' ways, he is ready to prosecute his reading on this plan. Of course, such reading has many vices, but the examination system has many vices too, and the latter kind of vice begets the former. There is, however, at least one redeeming virtue, and it is that much useful knowledge may be acquired in a systematic manner.

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(a) *He will read with a keen eye for words and their changes in form and meaning.*

*Question.\**—Point out any peculiarity in the meaning or scansion of these words in *King John*: *ocean, remember, rule, date, ensues.*

(b) *The sources of a writer's facts and inspiration need to be noted.*

*Question.*—From what sources did Spenser draw material for the *Faerie Queene*?

(c) *The chief facts of his life should be recorded in chronological order.*

*Question.*—Give a list of the chief events in Milton's life with dates.

(d) *His books should be tabulated in a similar fashion.*

*Question.*—Give a dated list and a classification of the plays of Ben Jonson.

(e) *The chief points in notable criticism should be memorised if possible.*

*Question.*—Give the substance of Lamb's remarks on Webster's peculiar power.

(f) *The advent of a new form in literature or the disappearance of an old one are matters of importance.*

*Question.*—Upon what foreign model did Spenser frame his stanza, and what part of it is his own addition?

\* Taken for the most part from London University papers.



## HOW TO DEAL WITH QUESTIONS

*Question.*—Briefly describe what is meant by a masque, an interlude, and a miscellany. When did they respectively die out in England?

(g) *Wherever political and social forces actively influence literature their effects are worthy of special note.*

*Question.*—What events in the age [1558–1603] gave a stimulus to scientific inquiry, and who were its chief promoters?

*Question.*—What was the effect upon poetry of this new tendency of the age?

The examination of specimen questions in this fashion will put the student into possession of methods that are specially suited to his peculiar needs. He cannot hope, it is true, to keep *everything* in view; that would be what is colloquially known as “too large an order”; but in the course of his reading he will make a note of those items which a study of examination papers will lead him to mark as likely to contain possible questions.

1. “Before commencing to answer a paper read carefully all that is printed on it. Sometimes the examiners indicate certain questions which all *must* attempt to answer; sometimes they restrict the number of questions which it is allowable to answer; sometimes they give directions as to penmanship, manner of

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folding paper, margins, etc. From inattention to any of these you may have a deduction made from the valuation of your answers. You must also note carefully the *time* allowed for answering.

2. Read over the whole of the questions before commencing to answer any ; note carefully those you think you can answer, and confine your attention to them until they are answered to your satisfaction.

3. In beginning to answer weigh each question carefully, and make sure that you perfectly understand its meaning. If you have any doubt ask the examiner to explain it.

4. Never begin a sentence until you know exactly what you are going to say in it. If necessary, write it down on a piece of waste paper ; you will thus avoid erasures on your manuscript, and erasures are seldom made without affecting the grammar and punctuation of a sentence, for which the valuation of an answer will be diminished.

5. Answer all that is asked in the question as fully as you can, but not with undue minuteness. A certain average time should be allowed to each answer. No extra valuation is given to an answer on account of its

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length ; and if you waste time you may have to give in your paper before you have come to the end of the questions that you can answer, and you will thus lose marks that may be all important.

6. It is understood that the *maximum* of valuation can be obtained without answering *all* the questions, therefore do not, in order to increase your marks, attempt to *guess* any answer. It is scarcely possible to do so without being detected, and the examiner will then suspect your other answers, and they may suffer in valuation in consequence.

7. Write carefully and legibly, and read over every answer attentively, looking well to the spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Make your sentences short and perfectly unambiguous in their meaning ; use no introductions ; do not attempt any fine writing, either as exordium or peroration ; and avoid all affectation of style, undue employment of foreign words, and colloquial expressions."\*

\* Adapted from *English Literature and Composition*, by R. DEMAUS, M.A. London : A. and C. Black.

#### 4. Specimen Questions.

[Some of the following questions are splendid models of what such questions ought to be. They are taken mainly from papers set for candidates at recent examinations.]

1. Compare Bacon and Locke both as thinkers and writers.

2. Give an account of the life and writings of Pope, and characterise his poetry in comparison with that of Dryden, making particular reference in your comparison to their translations from the classic poets.

3. Whom do you reckon the greatest English poet of the nineteenth century? Justify your preference by argument and quotation.

4. What do you consider to be the true epoch of the commencement of English literature? Give reasons.

5. Show in what manner the prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* throws light upon the social life of the period.

6. State what you consider to be the chief excellencies, and also the chief defects, in the poetry of the Elizabethan age.

7. Describe the plot or poetical framework of the *Faerie Queene*. Is the poem a complete work?

8. Upon what occasion, and with what object in view, did Milton write his *Areopagitica*? Give an outline of this treatise.

9. Explain the titles *Iconoclastes*, *Colasterion*, *Tetrachordon*, *Smectymnuus*, *Histrion-Mastix*, *Annus Mirabilis*.

## SPECIMEN QUESTIONS

10. Describe, with illustrations, the nature of the foreign influences which were acting upon English literature in the reign of Charles II.

11. Characterise the humour of any one among the following English humorists: Addison, Sterne, Fielding, Goldsmith.

12. What is your estimate of Dr. Johnson's merits as a writer, and also of the effects of his influence on literary style?

13. Name the satire which you think the most forcible in the language. Of what poem is Johnson's *London* a free version?

14. Mention examples of the influence for good or for ill of the events of English history on English literature.

15. Give a list of prose writers before 1550, and compare the progress generally of English prose with that of poetry.

16. Give a general account of the ballad literature of Great Britain.

17. Name, with dates, the principal versions of the Bible in English, and trace the effect of the Authorised Version on the literature of the country.

18. What is your estimate of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poetical criticism?

19. Mention the principal translations of Homer into English. Which do you consider to be the best? Who is believed to have been the first composer of English hexameters? Point out some of the causes which have contributed to their failure.

20. What do you consider to be the greatest historical work published during the last hundred and twenty years? Give reasons.

## ENGLISH LITERATURE IN EXAMINATIONS

21. Quote Lord Bacon's definition of poetry, and give the substance of any one of his essays.

22. Institute a comparison between Milton's *Lycidas* Shelley's *Adonais*, and Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, and name in each case the friend mourned.

23. State your view of the influence exerted on English literature by translations from other tongues.

24. Which has the truer feeling for nature—Shakespeare or Milton? Prove the justice of your judgment by quotations from both of these poets.

25. Compare the power exercised by the ballad writer in ancient with that possessed by the newspaper writer of modern times.

26. Estimate the influence of popular poetry on the character and spirit of a nation, and quote any striking passages that you may remember from English or Scottish ballads.

27. State as precisely as you can to what foreign sources Chaucer was indebted. Justify your statement by reference to his works, and by the relative dates of great Continental poets.

28. How far did Shakespeare borrow (1) from older English dramatists, (2) from contemporary or earlier chronicles, (3) from authors of classical antiquity. Illustrate your answer by a reference to various plays.

29. State what you know of the history of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*. Give an analysis of any paper in either of them.

30. Mention the principal literary forgeries of the eighteenth century.

## SPECIMEN QUESTIONS

31. Compare Dryden as a satirist with any other satirist, ancient or modern, whose works you may have read.

32. What is meant by the Lake School of Poets? Describe the characteristics of that school.

33. How do you define literature? Illustrate the uses of the term and show its true meaning.

34. Write a brief outline of the origin and development of the English novel.

35. "Truth is stranger than fiction." Discuss this statement in relation to the work of a novelist.

36. Compare the criticism of Matthew Arnold with that of Sainte-Beuve.

37. What are Dryden's chief prose works? In what respects of subject as well as of style did they help to set English prose in a new channel?

38. Compare or contrast the temper of mind and of style displayed by Milton and Burke as political writers, with allowance for their times, circumstances, and personal characters.

39. Estimate the debt of Keats to Dryden in *Lamia*.

40. Describe the chief peculiarities of Lamb's prose style. What were his models, and how did he use them?

41. Classify *Waverley*, *Rob Roy*, *Ivanhoe*, *The Antiquary*, in order of date, and according to the group of Scott's novels to which they belong. Give a leading example from *each* novel of Scott's tragedy and of his humour (1) in character, (2) in incident or scene.

## ENGLISH LITERATURE IN EXAMINATIONS

42. Assign the following passages to their authors, giving where you can the titles of the works in which they occur :—

- (a) But Christes love and His apostles twelve  
He taught, but first He followed it Himselfe.
- (b) . . . unless above himself he can  
Erect himself, how poor a thing is man !
- (c) O for a lodge in some vast wilderness !
- (d) The world knows nothing of its greatest men.
- (e) One crowded hour of glorious life  
Is worth an age without a name.
- (f) He prayeth well who loveth well  
Both man, and bird, and beast.
- (g) A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
- (h) Nature has done her part and why  
Is mightier man in his to fail ?

### 5. Model Answers.\*

1. Analyse the stanza of Spenser.

*Answer.*—The Spenserian stanza consists of nine lines, eight of them ordinary decasyllabic iambics, and the ninth an Alexandrine. The rhymes are thus distributed: the first line rhymes with the third; the second with the fourth, fifth, and seventh; and the sixth with the eighth and last. From its structure and the judicious distribution of its rhymes, this stanza has an unrivalled harmony and fulness of cadence.

\* From DEMAUS'S *English Literature*.



## MODEL ANSWERS

2. Compare Bacon and Locke both as thinkers and writers.

*Answer.*—As a *thinker* Bacon was distinguished by a certain grandeur and vastness of thought that few others have equalled. His imagination is as powerful as his reason is profound, and his works are full of thoughts that are at once practical and daring. Locke is a hard-headed reasoner, wanting in breadth and almost destitute of imagination; a patient, close thinker, who suspects fancy and listens only to experience. Bacon wrote when little attention had been paid to the graces of style, and his works consequently want the polish and neatness of a later age. His style, however, is one of great dignity and force, wonderfully concise for his time, well sustained, and adorned with rich imagery and felicitous illustration. Locke, on the contrary, expresses himself in a clumsy, rambling manner. He has very little command of language, and his long, ill-constructed sentences have neither precision, nor force, nor elegance. He is not only inferior in this respect to his master, Hobbes, but as compared with Bacon, who wrote nearly a century earlier, he is inferior in vigour of language, in clearness and happiness of expression, and in variety of illustration. As a *thinker* Locke occupies a high place; as a writer he must be rated very low.

3. Show in what manner the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* throws light upon the social life of the period.

*Answer.*—In the Prologue Chaucer sketches the character and appearance of each of the personages who figure in the *Tales*; and as there were nine-and-twenty pilgrims of both sexes, and of every grade of society, we have thus a very complete outline of the social life of

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the period. Among the pilgrims are a knight, a friar, a merchant, a franklin, a squire, a parson, a miller, a cook, and a student from Oxford, a jolly host, a bashful nun, and a witty widow from Bath. All classes of society, except the very highest and the very lowest, are thus represented ; and as their dress, manners, and peculiarities are portrayed with the fidelity and life of an unrivalled master of description, we have a lively view of the social life of England at the close of the fourteenth century.

*Question.*—Denote the origin of the following quotations, and indicate the kind of verse in which the poem is written :—

1. Full many a flower is born to blush unseen  
And waste its fragrance on the desert air.
2. But a bold peasantry their country's pride,  
When once destroyed can never be supplied.
3. A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.
4. Let observation, with extensive view,  
Survey mankind from China to Peru.
5. None but the brave deserve the fair.
6. Great wits are sure to madness near allied,  
And their partitions do their bonds divide.
7. For why? the good old rule  
Sufficeth them, the simple plan,  
That they should take who have the power,  
And they should keep who can.
8. A mighty maze, but not without a plan.
9. The man that hath not music in himself,  
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,  
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils ;

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- The motions of his spirit are dull as night,  
And his affections dark as Erebus :  
Let no such man be trusted.
10. The vision and the faculty divine.
11. The proper study of mankind is man.
12. I was all ear,  
And took in strains that might create a soul  
Under the ribs of death.
13. Better fifty years of [Europe than a cycle of Cathay.
14. The starry Galileo and his woes.
15. Rightly to be great  
Is not to stir without great argument,  
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw  
When honour's at the stake.
16. Or call up him who left half told  
The story of Cambuscan bold.
17. Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart.
18. That thou with ale or viler liquors  
Didst inspire Withers, Prynne, and Vicars.
19. A tun of man in thy large bulk is writ,  
But sure thou'rt but a kilderkin of wit.
20. Who born for the universe narrow'd his mind,  
And to party gave up what was meant for mankind.
21. For my purpose holds  
To sail beyond the sunset and the baths  
Of all the western stars until I die.

*Answer.*—(1) From Gray's *Elegy*, written in elegiac verse ; (2) Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, written in ordinary rhyming heroic verse ; (3) Keats' *Endymion*, in rhyming heroics ; (4) Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes*, in

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rhyming heroics : (5) Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*, a lyric poem in irregular verse ; (6) Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*, in rhyming heroics ; (7) Wordsworth's *Lines on Rob Roy's Grave*, in a kind of ballad metre ; (8) Pope's *Essay on Man*, in rhyming heroics ; (9) Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, in blank verse ; (10) Wordsworth's *Excursion*, in blank verse ; (11) Pope's *Essay on Man* ; (12) Milton's *Comus*, chiefly in blank verse ; (13) Tennyson's *Locksley Hall*, a trochaic measure ; (14) Byron's *Childe Harold*, in the Spenserian stanza ; (15) Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, in blank verse ; (16) Milton's *L'Allegro*, a lyric poem in octosyllabic verse ; (17) Wordsworth, sonnet, "Milton" ; (18) Butler's *Hudibras*, written in octosyllabics ; (19) Dryden's *Mac Flecnœ*, a satire in rhyming heroics ; (20) Goldsmith's *Retaliation*, in anapæstic verse ; (21) Tennyson's *Ulysses*, in blank verse.

## APPENDIX

### FINE PASSAGES IN PROSE AND POETRY.\*

IN reproducing these selections from *The Fortnightly Review* one or two explanations are necessary. The most important is that fine passages from the Greek and Latin classics, as well as foreign authors, have been deleted, as it was not thought advisable to include them in a book dealing with English literature. I hope this fact will be borne in mind, otherwise a grave injustice might be done to those writers and critics who appear in the following pages.

The second explanation is concerned with the utility of publishing a selected list of what are considered fine passages. Every collection of typical pieces is open to certain objections, but the advantages easily outweigh the disadvantages. It is easy to see, for instance, how the individuality of the writer is expressed in the passages chosen; and how the chosen passages in their miscellaneous total form an interesting guide, more or less safe, to what is worthy of careful attention. But the chief merit

\* I am indebted to the editor and proprietors of *The Fortnightly Review* for permission to reproduce these preferences.

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is that these passages form a sort of Reading Book in Literary Criticism, and for this reason it is hoped their republication will be justified.

### 1. Mr. Matthew Arnold writes :—

“ Acts of mental judgment attempted in compliance with a sudden call like yours are difficult and untrustworthy. I should not like to pronounce on the spur of the moment what work or what passage in prose or poetry I think the best known to me. But independently of any such weighing, judging, and comparing as is needed for this, we have a positive test of the degree in which *passages*, at any rate, have moved and pleased us, from the force with which such passages have lodged themselves in our mind and memory.”

In applying this test Mr. Arnold referred to several classical authors, the only English passage being Burke's tribute to John Howard, the prison reformer.

### 2. Mr. Grant Allen writes :—

“ I couldn't, with justice to my own taste, pick out any one, or even any ten passages of English poetry as being in my opinion absolutely best. The selection would be naturally one-sided ; it would leave out much that is essential to one's idea of true poetry ; and I don't know that any poem ever strikes one as perfect except the smallest lyrics, which have least in them. The first two books of *Paradise Lost*, Shelley's *Skylark*, Keat's *Nightingale*, Austin Dobson's *Dead Letter*, Lang's *Ballade of Sleep*—these are among the things we cannot omit. But then, in saying this, one is leaving out Tennyson and

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Coleridge—and ought not *Aenone* and parts of *In Memoriam* to be there as well? Then again, one has forgotten *Thyrsis*, and the *Scholar Gipsy*, and *Empedocles on Etna*.

“I don’t think I can do more than say that to me very modern poetry, and especially contemporaneous poetry, is the most satisfying—William Morris, Matthew Arnold, Andrew Lang, and Austin Dobson. Keats is glorious, but I don’t join in a conspiracy to kill our living Keatses by overpraising him to their detriment. The literature which expresses the thought of the day is the literature which live men ought to read and revel in.

“As to prose, the difficulty is still greater. In prose, except with a few posturing folk like Ruskin, the matter is so infinitely more important than the manner. The best passages I ever read are in Herbert Spencer, especially the *Biology*. His style, which purely literary critics so greatly misunderstand, is the most perfect instrument for its particular purpose ever fashioned by the intellect of man. But as mere literature, I think the introduction to R. L. Stevenson’s *Dynamiter* the finest thing in our language except, perhaps, in *Richard Feverel* where Richard and Lucy wander in the fields together.”

### 3. Mr. Thomas Hardy writes:—

“I should have replied sooner, but the words, ‘the one passage in all poetry which seems to me the finest,’ quite bewildered my mind by their immensity. I should say there is no one passage finest; that the various kinds of best poetry are not reducible to a common standard. ‘There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars.’ I know that you ask, ‘What *seems* the finest?’ but that seeming varies with

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the time and mood, and according to the class of poetry that is for the nonce nearest to the tone of our situation.

"I have very often felt (but not always) that one of the most beautiful of English lyrics is Shelley's *Lament*, 'O World! O Life! O Time!' And of descriptive poetry I do not know that anything has as yet been fairly able to oust our old friends in *Childe Harold*—e.g. Canto III., stanzas 85 to 87.

"I know this is an old-fashioned taste; but it is a well-considered relapse on my part, for though in past years I have been very modern in this matter, I begin to feel that mere intellectual subtlety will not hold its own in time to come against the straightforward expression of good feeling.

"With regard to prose, the task is somewhat more practicable, and yet how hopeless! But I will go thus far: I think that the passages in Carlyle's *French Revolution* on the silent growth of the oak have never been surpassed by anything I have read, except, perhaps, by his sentences on night in a city, as specimens of contemplative prose (if they may be so called); and that in narrative prose the chapter of the Bible (2 Sam. xviii.) containing the death of Absalom is the finest example of its kind that I know, showing beyond its power and pathos the highest artistic cunning."

4. Mr. Andrew Lang, in poetry, selects a classical passage; and in prose, chapter clxxvi. from Malory's *Mort d'Arthur*.

5. Mr. W. S. Lilly, among other passages, refers to one from Milton's *Areopagitica*, beginning with, "Methinks I see in my mind," and closing with "a year of sects and schisms."



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### 6. Mr. George Meredith writes:—

“ . . . In modern English verse I would cite for excellence Keats' *Ode to a Grecian Urn* and *Ode to Autumn*; Tennyson's *Aenone*; the *Kubla Khan* of Coleridge. In modern prose the description of Rachel, under title of 'Vashti,' in *Villete*, by Charlotte Brontë, chapter xxiii.”

In general poetry Mr. Meredith refers to the whole of the second scene in Act iv. of Shakespeare's *Henry the Eighth*. In prose he quotes Hamlet's speech to the players.

### 7. Mr. Augustine Birrell, the author of *Obiter Dicta*, writes:—

“My delay in replying to your kind communication has certainly not been occasioned by any lack of interest in your proposal, but because the time has been spent in attempting to combat the conviction that I have not earned any right to take part in such a trial of wits.

“But since you have asked me it would, perhaps, be a refinement to decline, and I therefore say that in prose I would instance (1) the two concluding paragraphs of Lord Bacon's Plan of the *Novum Organum*, beginning, 'For the matter in hand is no mere felicity of speculation' (Spedding's *Bacon*, vol. iv. p. 32); (2) Dr. Johnson's final paragraph to his Preface to the *English Dictionary*, beginning 'In this work, when it shall be found,' etc. (Oxford Edition of Works, vol. v. p. 50).

“Were a bit of poetical prose permissible, I should give the last passage of Sir Thomas Browne's *Fragment on Mummies*, beginning, 'Egypt itself is now become the land of obliviousness, and doteth' (Works, vol. iv. p. 276. Pickering's edition, 1835).

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“In poetry it is surely Shakespeare first and the rest—anywhere! Were selection other than an outrage I should give, for dramatic poetry, from *Macbeth*, Act ii., Scene 2, the passage beginning, ‘I have done the deed,’ to the end; and from *Lear*, the scene with Cordelia, Act iv., Scene 7, beginning, ‘Oh, my dear father,’ to ‘I am old and foolish.’

“For pure poetry—that is, examples of the magical music of words—it abounds everywhere in Shakespeare. A specimen occurs in the *Winter’s Tale*, Act iv., Scene 4, in the passage beginning, ‘O Proserpina,’ and ending, ‘The flower-de-luce being one’; but I cannot wonder that some of your best judges have found it necessary to exclude Shakespeare altogether from their consideration, though such a course is hardly consistent with your scheme.”

8. Lord Coleridge gives in poetry the *Kubla Khan* of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Christabel*, the conclusion to Part I., and the whole of Keats’s *Ode to a Nightingale*.

9. Miss Francis Power Cobbe writes:—

“I send you as desired my favourite passages of prose and poetry. Whether they are the finest in literature I am by no means prepared to say; but I like them best.”

In poetry—Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, Poems liv., lv., lvi.

In prose—Hooker’s *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book I.

10. Mr. Oswald Crawford writes:—

“I am glad you have enlarged your invitation to us and asked for such passages from great authors as have ‘lodged themselves in our memories and afforded us the

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most continual delight.' The question is still a hard enough one to deal with, and for my part I feel like that adventurer in the *Arabian Nights* who, finding himself in the Valley of Diamonds, had to fill his belt with the lightest load of the finest stones at the shortest notice. Like him I am picking up gems of thought and phrase from the realm of literature and reluctantly laying them down for what I fancy finer ones.

"Not only will your budget of selected passages give us, your readers, a sure literary treat—here, indeed, is a lottery where there are prizes and no blanks at all—but we may please ourselves with the thought that many worthy ladies and gentlemen, nay, some even who are critics (though this is a bold word in me) may wake up after reading your pages to perceive how very great a thing, how high and noble an art, is this one of marshalling words and phrases in prose and verse.

"As we are English-speaking people writing for English-speaking readers it would seem well in these selections not to travel outside the wide domain of English literature. As to whether to select from living men or them of old—though, with Mr. Grant Allen, I find living authors particularly soul-satisfying—it nevertheless appears to me that they, one and all, suffer from one drawback, one fault—a defect indeed which I am far from wishing to have amended in all cases : they are alive. Our judgment of their merits may be sound, but surely it has to be confirmed in the appeal court of time. As the literary highway across the centuries is marked by many bleached skeletons of famous reputations, may it not be that a prophetic eye could even now discern the dry bones and empty skull behind some modern singing robes ? May it not be that some shrines where we now worship may become ruins as the years run on ? *Absit omen !* but it

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seems wiser to choose from works which have been approved by the repeated verdicts of gone-by generations, and have the seal of the centuries upon their fame.

“In prose I choose Fuller first. For good English sense, almost undiluted by the pedantry of his day, for a taking quaintness which is wit, for humour, for sympathy with human nature, for noble thought, and for all this set to the accompaniment of a compact and harmonious and most artful style, he stands, to me, pre-eminent. The passage I quote has been praised by Coleridge and by Charles Lamb for its mastery in the art of swift narration and for the address whereby the attention and sympathy and judgment of the reader are held in suspense to the last.”

In prose—

Fuller, *Worthies of England*, “Henry de Essex.”

Dr. Johnson’s *Letter to Lord Chesterfield*.

### 11. Mr. Wilkie Collins writes:—

“Fortunately for myself I have what is called ‘a catholic taste’ in literature. When I think of the immense variety of high achievement which literature presents, I am unable to understand the state of mind which can prefer any *one* passage, or any one writer. If I had the strength and the time I should be capable, I am afraid, of overwhelming you with fifty favourite passages, taken from the great poets of the world, which equally excite my admiration and equally delight me. Let me only quote as examples of what I mean: (1) the 4th Scene in the 3rd Act of *Lear*; (2) Byron’s ‘Address to the Sea,’ in the 4th Canto of *Childe Harold*; (3) Walter Scott, Canto II., stanzas 28 to 32, in *The Lord of the Isles*; (4) Gray’s *Elegy*, excepting ‘The Epitaph,’ which,

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I venture to think, is not quite worthy of that great poem ; (5) Dryden's *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day* ; (6) Pope's *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*.

"Here are six passages, from English poetry alone, representing modes of thought and forms of expression so entirely differing one from the other that it seems to me to be absolutely impossible justly to compare them. In each example I see equally, and admire equally, the mind of a master. And if you asked me to sacrifice one of my six passages I should be incapable of arriving at a decision, and should be driven to ask for an appeal to the laws of chance."

### 12. Lord Derby writes :—

"It seems to me almost impossible to select from the literature of all ages and countries any one passage, either in poetry or prose, as being absolutely the best, and my answer to the question contained in your circular must therefore be necessarily imperfect. I would further observe that the finest passages generally lose most by being detached from their surroundings, and that a few lines can no more be taken as a sample of a poem, or of an essay, than a brick as a sample of the house from which it is removed. All, therefore, that I can do is to mention those writings which, from whatever cause, have most deeply impressed themselves on my mind as types and models of literary excellence.

"In English prose, the essays of Bacon have always appeared to me, both as regards style and substance, to surpass all other compositions in our language ; but their merit is so equal that I scarcely know which to pick out. The compiler of an anthology could hardly go wrong among them.

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“In English poetry, Gray’s *Elegy*, and the ‘Address to the Ocean,’ in *Childe Harold*, would be my choice, though I should be glad also to find room for Wordsworth’s famous ode.

“The task which you have set your correspondents would be easier if the number of preferred passages were less restricted.”

### 13. Professor Dowden writes:—

“I find it possible to give something like answers to the questions proposed only by limiting my range of choice to three or four writers of English verse and three or four writers of English prose. *King Lear* I take to be the greatest of Shakespeare’s plays, but whether it contains his ‘finest passage of poetry’ I cannot say. When we speak of a great dramatic passage we speak of one which, though perhaps not in itself pre-eminent for beauty, carries with it the dramatic force of character and situation. Thus in *Julius Cæsar* the words uttered by Brutus, ‘No man bears sorrow better. Portia is dead,’ have in them all the ardour and self-restraint and some of the self-esteem of the character of Brutus. No single line in any English play perhaps is more thrilling in its dramatic power than that put by Webster into the mouth of Ferdinand, when Bosola displays the body of the Duchess of Malfi, ‘Cover her face: mine eyes dazzle: she died young.’ The following lines, when taken in their dramatic surrounding, may rank, I suppose, among the greatest written by Shakespeare: *Lear*, Act iv., Scene 7, from ‘Where have I been?’ etc., to ‘I think this lady to be my child Cordelia.’

“No other passage of Milton’s poetry haunts my memory so often as that which brings the *Samson*

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*Agnostes* to a close: *Chorus*, from 'All is best, though we oft doubt,' to the end.

"Of Shelley's lyrics I think the greatest is his *Ode to the West Wind*'; no stanza will bear to be severed from the rest. Wordsworth never wrote lines of more magical beauty than those inspired by the voice of the solitary reaper—

'A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard  
In spring-time from the cuckoo-bird,  
Breaking the silence of the seas  
Among the farthest Hebrides.

'Will no one tell me what she sings?  
Perhaps the plaintive murmurs flow  
For old, unhappy, far-off things  
And battles long ago:

'Or is it some more humble lay,  
Familiar matter of to-day?  
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain  
That has been, and may be again?'

"Keats has written nothing greater than the last stanza of his *Ode on Melancholy*—

'She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die;  
And Joy whose hand is ever at his lips  
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,  
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:  
Ay, in the very temple of Delight  
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,  
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue  
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;  
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might  
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.'

"Tennyson is seen at his best in *Ulysses*, from 'Come, my friends, 'tis not too late,' etc., to end of poem.

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"Perhaps no English writer has written prose so exquisitely effective as that which Paul Louis Courier has written in certain pages of his best pamphlets. The greatest English prose is not the prose of intelligence or *esprit*, but the prose of enthusiasm and of passion, melancholy or joyous. The well-known passage on the death of his son in Burke's *Letter to a Noble Lord*, is of its kind most admirable, from 'Had it pleased God,' etc., to 'Duke of Bedford would have it from an unworthy parent.'

"In another kind nothing can be more beautiful than Bunyan's description of the approach of Christian and Hopeful to the celestial city. From 'And now were these two men, as 'twere, in heaven before they came at it; being swallowed up with the sight of angels, and with hearing of their melodious notes. Here also they had the city itself in view, and they thought,' etc., to 'And thus they came up to the gate.'

"A famous passage in De Quincey's *Autobiographic Sketches*, where he describes himself standing a child by his dead sister's bed, while the solemn summer wind blows, is a magnificent example of the rhetorical pathetic. Of Newman's *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, I know of none more wonderful than that named 'The Invisible World.'"

14. Mr. Edmund Gosse in poetry selects:—

Milton, *Paradise Regained*, Book IV.;

In prose—

Thomas De Quincey, *The English Mail Coach*, Section III.; *Dream Fugue*, Section IV.

In selecting the passage from *Paradise Regained*, "Mr. Edmund Gosse desires to explain that he has



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chosen it, not as being the most pathetic, or impassioned, or even imaginative with which he is acquainted, but as combining, with something of each of those qualities, a greater variety and fulness of technical excellence in the art of verse than perhaps any other passage in English poetry; workmanship being, as Mr. Gosse conceives, the safest criterion in a comparative criticism such as that suggested by the editor of the *Fortnightly Review*.

“In like manner, the passage from De Quincey, which is of the same order of writing, is selected as perhaps the most successful example of deliberately balanced and consciously elaborated style to be found in English prose.”

15. Vernon Lee sends us the following list of passages :—

In poetry—

R. Browning, *The Ring and the Book*, second speech of Guido Franceschini.

In prose—

Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, Death of Flavian.

Walter Savage Landor, *Imaginary Conversations*, Henry VIII. and Anne Boleyn.

16. Sir John Lubbock writes :—

“Your letter has been much in my thoughts. One passage after another has suggested itself to me : but there are so many one would wish to include, and which it seems ungrateful to omit, that I have felt in the utmost perplexity.

“For reasons already alluded to by other correspondents, you would probably omit the Bible, and I scarcely think we can properly estimate living writers.

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“In poetry I do not know anything grander than the passage on ‘Mercy,’ from the *Merchant of Venice*, which Lord Granville has already quoted; while on a less exalted level I would suggest Gray’s *Elegy*.

“In prose, again, there are so many considerations that I cannot select any single passage. As an illustration of vivid description I would take Dean Stanley’s description of Thebes and Carnac (*In Sinai and Palestine*, p. xxxviii. and onwards); while on the higher range of human feelings the closing passages of the *Phædo* (pp. 496–499, in Jowett’s vol. i.) appear to me to reach the height of pathos and sublimity.”

17. Mr. W. H. Mallock writes:—

“As I understand the question you have addressed to me, I am compelled to discriminate between sublimity and greatness. Were I in search of sublimity I should go to Pope or Tennyson, to such passages as ‘Come down, O maid,’ from Tennyson’s *Princess*, and to Pope’s satire on Addison; but for passages combining both sublimity and perfection the last four stanzas of the fifth ode of Book III. of Horace’s *Odes*, or if you prefer English, *Macbeth*, Act v., Scene 5, from “Out, out” to “signifying nothing,” seem to me in poetry never to have been surpassed; and in prose I prefer the famous passage in which Macaulay speaks of the Romish Church in his essay on Ranke’s *History of the Popes*.”

18. Mr. Ernest Rhys writes:—

“For more than a month past I have been in such confusion of overwork that it has been impossible until now to reply to your request in the matter of selecting fine passages of prose and verse. However, I do not

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regret the delay altogether, for it has enabled me to discover by this month's *Fortnightly* that you are allowing your contributors of select passages a certain wider margin to express their critical notions in than at first appeared from your circular. In particular, I am very glad to be saved from having to decide upon any passages with a statement of critical belief in their absolute supremacy; for I do not feel that I have yet got hold of any ultimate canon of literary excellence for either prose or verse. So I offer the following passages for what they are worth, as having given me, peculiarly among all prose and verse, great delight and great literary stimulus. I should, it is perhaps well to add, have included passages from Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, Browning, and Walt Whitman, if it were not that one's estimate of living writers, as Matthew Arnold has pointed out, is apt to be too personal to have much value on purely literary grounds."

In verse—

Marlowe, Plays, *Doctor Faustus*, Act. v., Scene 4, from *Faust*, "Oh, Faustus! Now hast thou but one bare hour to live" to "To practise more than heavenly power permits" (the end of the play).

Wordsworth, Poems, the whole of the poem (seven verses) beginning, "Three years she grew in sun and shower."

Burns, Songs, from "O my love's like a red, red rose" to "Though it were ten thousand miles" (four verses).

Anon. (Sir Walter Scott's Border Minstrelsy), *Clerk Saunders*, from "Clerk Saunders and May Margaret" to "And dull and drowsie were his een" (first fourteen verses).

In prose—

The passage from Sir Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poetrie*, beginning with, "Now, therein, of all sciences."

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Milton, *An Apology against a Pamphlet called a Modest Confutation*, 1642, from "I had my time, as others have who have good learning" to "proved to me so many incitements to the love and steadfast observation of virtue."

De Quincey, *Opium Eater* (in the section, "The Pains of Opium"), from "I thought that it was a Sunday morning in May" to "seventeen years before—when we were both children."

19. Miss Olive Schreiner, author of *On an African Farm*, writes:—

"I found the question, 'What is finest in literature?' scarcely answerable.

"The two passages I send have certain rare qualities which fit them for a place in any anthology which aims at being broadly human and representative."

R. Browning, *A Grammarian's Funeral*, from "Others mistrust and say, 'But time escapes'" to "Living and dying."

Emerson, essay on "Friendship."

20. Mr. A. C. Swinburne writes:—

"As to selecting a passage from Shakespeare, it would be easy to select a hundred among which it would be impossible to choose. The passage in *Antony and Cleopatra* about evening clouds ('black Vesper's pageants'), and that in *The Tempest* about the 'cloud-capped towers' are two instances of kindred inspiration, between which no reasonable preference could decide. There are two passages in one scene of *Pericles* which are in the very front rank of my favourites—'Thou God of this great vast, rebuke these surges,' and, 'A terrible childbed hast

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thou had, my dear,' and so forth to the end of either speech (iii. 1). There are half-a-dozen in the fourth act of *Timon*, e.g. 'That nature, being sick of man's unkindness,' and as many in the unfinished fragment of the *Two Noble Kinsmen*, e.g. the prayer of Arcite to Mars (v. 1), 'Thou mighty one, that with thy power hast turned green Neptune into purple,' to the close of the speech ending, 'To my design march boldly. Let us go.' From *Lear*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* I should have to choose whole parts instead of single speeches; my favourite passage in *Hamlet* is the great speech cut out by the player-editors (iv. 4), 'How all occasions do inform against me,' and in that speech, I need hardly say, the divine verses on 'god-like reason.'

"I have no time to go further, and indeed should not know where to stop, except to set down the numbers of the following twenty sonnets for addition to my list: 18, 19, 29, 30, 33, 55, 60, 65, 71, 73, 74, 90, 98, 99, 102, 104, 106, 107, 116, 146."

21. In making his selections Mr. John Addington Symonds chooses:--

In English poetry—

Shakespeare, Sonnet 129.

In English prose—

Sir Thomas Browne's *Hydriotaphia*, chapter v.

22. Mr. Theodore Watts:—

Shakespeare, *Othello*, Act v., Scene 2.

*Mort d'Arthur*, Book XXI. chapter xiii., from "And thou wert the courtlyest Knighte that ever bare shelde" to "that ever put sphere in the reyst."

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act ii., Scene 2.

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Sterne.—“‘Thou hast left this matter short,’ said my Uncle Toby to the Corporal, as he was putting him to bed,—‘and I will tell thee in what, Trim,’” down to “blotted it out for ever.”

### 23. Mr. Edwin Arnold writes:—

“Returning from the country I found your letter asking me to give you what, in my judgment, are the finest passages in verse and prose, apparently in all literatures. The request, much as it honours me, seems one impossible to comply with. The masterpieces of literary genius resemble those of music, in respect that different specimens suit different times and moods ; sometimes one delights, sometimes another.

“But as it would be discourteous not to offer some reply, I will venture to name two or three things in lyric verse which seem to me, at all times, of perfect workmanship and inspiration.

“1. *To Althea in Prison*, by Lord Lovelace.

“2. Verses from George Herbert, beginning with ‘Love bade me welcome ! yet my soul drew back.’

“3. Walt Whitman’s *Address to Death*.”

### 24. Mr. Thomas Baily Aldrich writes:—

“I doubtless could select two or three hundred passages which seem to me as notable as the verses I venture to quote ; but these somehow linger in my memory, and are expressions which fit my moods—and tenses—more often than possibly finer things do. Individual taste, however, amounts to little. We like a thing because we like it ; it has a quality, a magnetism, for us personally, and we are right in yielding ourselves to the influence without too much trying to justify it. I know some rather poor verses

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—I am not becoming autobiographical here—in which I take great pleasure ; and I know some technically perfect poems which I cannot tolerate. I think that the late Dr. Fell was very properly disliked.

“If I were compiling a volume of brief extracts in prose and verse, I should instinctively turn to the following :—

“In poetry—

“Shakespeare, *Richard II.*, Act ii., Scene 1.

“Emerson, *Shakespeare*.

“Robert, Lord Lytton, *Aristocracy*—

“‘To thee be all men heroes : every race  
Noble : all women virgins : and each place  
A temple : know thou nothing that is base.’

“Matthew Arnold, *Sohrab and Rustum*.

“In prose—

“Abraham Lincoln, *Gettysburg*.”

25. Mr. Austin Dobson writes :—

“The list you ask for would, I fear, be a very large one, and it is possible that to-day’s examples would not be those of to-morrow. I give you reference to four long-remembered passages, but they are only four among many.”

In poetry—

Chaucer, *Knight’s Tale* (Morris’s text), from ‘Nought may the woeful spirit in myn herte’ to ‘Foryete not Palamon, the gentil man.’

Tennyson, *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*.

In prose—

Passage from Bacon’s essay, “Of Death,” from “It is

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as natural to die as to be born" to "Extinctus amabitur idem."

Passage from Thackeray's *Esmond*.

26. The Rev. J. Llewellyn Davies writes :—

"I assume that, at the present stage of your collection, a contributor should rather avoid well-known passages. I offer these extracts from Browning, and Maurice, and Carlyle, not as the finest to be found in all literature, but as pieces of verse and prose which have specially attracted me."

In poetry—

Browning's *Paracelsus*, near the end, from "I knew, I felt (perception unexpressed.)"

In prose—

Carlyle's *Past and Present*, Book II. chapter iii. : "Death of Landlord Edmund," from "Another version is" to "is seen in this world."

Maurice, *Prophets and Kings* (end of Sermon II.), from "They were lovely and pleasant in their lives" to "is every hour working in you that you may be."

27. The Hon. and Rev. Canon Fremantle writes :—

"It seems to me it would take a lifetime to go through all literature and determine what one would judge to be the best or finest passage in prose or verse. Neither can I say that of the literature with which I am conversant any one or two pieces are absolutely the best. Things gain a hold upon one through expressing one's own feelings, or through association; and one admires one at one time, another at another. Moreover, I like certain



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passages because I have thoroughly entered into them and grasped them ; while I am conscious that there may be many others of which I am either ignorant or have imperfect knowledge, or which express feelings to which I am a comparative stranger, and which may be in their kind quite as good as those I name.

“I have looked up a few passages, both prose and poetry, which I admire, and would willingly recommend, but I could not give them as in my judgment the best in all literature.”

In poetry—

Byron's *Childe Harold*, Canto IV., stanzas 88 to 98, from “And thou” to “bring forth.”

Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, pp. 89 and 90, from “Witchelms” to “My wish for thee.”

Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, Act ii., Scene 5, “Song of Asia.”

In prose—

Burke's *French Revolution* (Burke's works, 4to, 1792, Dodsley, vol. iii. p. 109), from “I hear that the august person” [leave out paragraph in p. 111 beginning “This mixed system,” and the two on p. 112, each beginning “On this scheme”] to “Kings will be tyrants from policy when subjects are rebels from principle.”

Ramden's *Sermons at Cambridge in 1800*, quoted by Gladstone, *State in Relation to Church*, 4th edition (Murray, 1841), p. 169.

28. Mr. Frederic Harrison writes :—

“My absence abroad has prevented me from answering your invitation to state my favourite passages in literature. I have some time ago published my opinion ; and (putting aside the Bible and Shakespeare's plays) I do not

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swerve from it ; that there exists nothing in literature to surpass. In verse, the 24th *Iliad*, second half—the burial of Hector. In prose, Sir T. Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, concluding chapters—'Death of Lancelot.'

"I have not my books here, and I cannot give verse and line. But to put aside the Bible and Shakespeare's plays, my own reading in *verse* lies mainly in these poets—Æschylus, *Agamemnon*, *Prometheus* ; Dante, *Purgatorio* ; Milton, all the poetry ; Shakespeare, sonnets ; Shelley, shorter lyrics ; Wordsworth, shorter lyrics.

"For English prose I do not think its wealth and power could be shown without recurring to such books as—Malory, *Morte d'Arthur* ; Prayer Book, 'Burial of the Dead' ; Milton, *Areopagitica* (passages) ; J. Taylor, *Holy Living* (passages) ; Bunyan, early portion of *Pilgrim's Progress* ; Defoe, *Crusoe alone on his Island : his Illness* ; Swift, *Gulliver in Lilliput* ; Goldsmith, early part of *Vicar of Wakefield* ; Burke, on the *French Revolution* ; Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* (later part).

"I rather doubt the possibility of selecting one, or even two, short passages. For absolutely perfect mastery of verse I would select (1) *Iliad* xxiv. (*sub. jin.*), and (2) *Lycidas*. And of prose—(1) 'Death of Lancelot' ; (2) Burial Service ; (3) opening of *Vicar of Wakefield*.

"As you see, I am for the accepted judgment of the world—for the books and the passages which are household words, which it would be commonplace to cite again. The world is right in this matter. The best passages are the most familiar passages. I have nothing new to add, and I very much doubt if anything new is to be added."

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29. Dr. Hornsby selects, in poetry, from :—

Shakespeare, *Henry V.*, Act ii., Scene 2, the passage which begins :—

“*K. Hen.* The mercy, that was quick in us but late”  
and ends with :—

“Their faults are open,  
Arrest them to the answer of the law ;—  
And God acquit them of their practices !”

Milton, *Paradise Lost*, lines 544–621, from “All in a moment” to “found out their way.”

Sir W. Scott, *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, Canto II., stanzas 7 to 28 inclusive, from “Again on the knight” to “Still he prayed.”

In prose—

Milton, *Areopagitica*, third paragraph in Mitford’s edition, about 150 lines from the beginning of the treatise, “I deny not but that it is of the greatest concernment” to “whole nations face the worse.”

30. Mr. Frederic W. H. Myers writes :—

“In the remarks with which you, Mr. Editor, have prefaced this anthology you express surprise at the number of admired passages which your contributors have cited from languages other than our own. Permit me to say that I, on the other hand, am impressed with the growth and prevalence of the view which you seem personally to hold as to the absolute superiority of English poetry and prose ; the growth and prevalence, I mean, of this view, as compared with any overt expression given to it by men of letters in former generations. If voices far more numerous and more ardent are raised for Shakespeare than for all antiquity—nay, for all foreign tongues

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together—if as many votes are given to De Quincey as to Plato, more to Keats than to Sophocles, more to Byron than to Horace; if Dryden is honoured, and nowhere Pindar; Baudelaire, and nowhere Lucretius; Mr. Lang, and nowhere Catullus; Mr. Dobson, and nowhere Sappho; surely the champions of modern literature, and of English as the finest of literatures, have no cause for dismay."

After discussing this matter at length, Mr. Myers says:—

"Turning from Plato to English prose, there seems little outside the Bible and Prayer Book which does not jar by comparison. Let me select the *Magnificat*, on which no comment is needed.

"In English poetry, for brevity's sake, I will mention only Wordsworth's *Laodamia*, Blanco White's sonnet, *Night and Death*; Rossetti's sonnet, *The One Hope*; and two short poems by a living classic—Lord Tennyson's *The Voyage* and *To Virgil*.

### "NIGHT AND DEATH.

"Mysterious Night! when our first parent knew  
Thee from report divine, and heard thy name,  
Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,  
This glorious canopy of light and blue?  
Yet 'neath a curtain of translucent dew,  
Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,  
Hesperus with the host of heaven came,  
And lo! creation widened in man's view.  
Who could have thought such darkness lay concealed  
Within thy beams, O sun! or who could find,  
Whilst fly, and leaf, and insect stood revealed,  
That to such countless orbs thou mad'st us blind!  
Why do we then shun Death with anxious strife?  
If Light can thus deceive, wherefore not Life?"

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31. Mr. H. D. Traill writes :—

“Your request puts me in a double difficulty. If you ask me what I like best in poetry I find the question hard enough to answer, but when you imply, as you do, that the passages in poetry and prose which have ‘lodged themselves most fixedly in my memory, and have afforded me the most continual delight,’ are also and necessarily those which I think most worthy of a place in an anthology, I ask myself whether, with me at any rate, that is so. I am not at all sure that it always, or indeed that it often, is so. The ‘personal equation’ seems to me to play so large a part in one’s poetical tastes that the charm which certain passages have for certain persons is no assuredly accurate measure of the force of their appeal to the common heart and imagination of mankind. Besides, the effect of these varies with the individual at different periods of his life. Milton’s *Lycidas* haunted me for many years, until Wordsworth’s *Intimations of Immortality* displaced it. Since then, and to this hour, I can seldom look up at the sky by night or day without one or another strophe of Shelley’s *Cloud* (richer, I think, in word-magic than any poem of equal length) recurring to my mind. But if fixed lodgment in the memory and continual power of delighting are to be the tests, there is many another passage, even outside the inexhaustible treasury of Shakespeare, which would have an equal right with these to my suffrage. From among them I select the three following strophes of Coleridge’s *Dejection*, a passage which sets forth a profoundly true theory of poetic sensibility with exquisite beauty of poetic form.

“In prose I will choose two passages, each from an English divine, the one a model of subdued and chastened

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eloquence, the other full of the exuberance of fancy and the unrestrained play of emotion ; the two together showing by their contrast how wonderfully diverse are the tones which can be sounded, with equal melody and majesty, from the 'clear harp' of our language."

In poetry—

Coleridge, *Dejection, an Ode*. "O Lady! we receive but what we give" to "And now is almost grown the habit of my soul."

In prose—

Sydney Smith, *Essay on the Defence of Prisoners*.

Jeremy Taylor, *Sermon on the Return of Prayers*.

32. Mr. Herbert Warren, the President of Magdalen, Oxford, writes :—

"I do not wish these selections to be regarded as pieces more beautiful or more excellent than many others which could be found on even a very superficial survey of all literature. They are simply what you have asked me to send you, passages which amongst others have impressed themselves upon and dwelt in my own mind and memory, and to which I often return, and always with renewed pleasure. I say amongst many others, for I have found it difficult to select at all from so wide and rich a field as that to which you invited me. The fact is that of literature peculiarly the maxim holds good, *Securus judicat orbis terrarum*. The great world-classics have none of them been given their place in the firmament of letters without reason ; though they be many and differ in glory, they are all stars. Many pieces therefore might, and in justice perhaps one ought to, be taken from every great author. I have endeavoured to find a principle of selection. If I venture to think there is any special charac-

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teristic which attaches to these pieces which I have chosen, many or most of which are well and commonly known, it is this, that they are, in so far as single pieces can be, typical, each of them, of the style and merits of the author from whom they are drawn, and have in each case something of his peculiar *cachet* upon them.

“Again, I repeat, I do not propose them either as the best passages even in this way or as in any sense discoveries of mine, but simply as passages which in my opinion might form part of a world anthology of verse and prose.”

In poetry Mr. Warren selects—

Milton, *Paradise Lost*, opening of the third book, lines 1-55.

Tennyson, well-known passage in *The Passing of Arthur*, “And slowly answered Arthur” to “grievous wound.”

In prose—

Ezekiel (in the Authorised Version), chapter xxvii., “The Burthen of Tyre.”

Gibbon, the “Death of Hosein,” chapter l. of *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, “A familiar story” to “sorrow and indignation.”

Carlyle, *French Revolution*, Book V. chapter vii., “O evening sun of July” to “it is a revolution” (at the end of the chapter).

Burke, *Letter to a Noble Lord* (towards the end), “Had it pleased God to continue to me” to “from an unworthy parent.”

33. Mr. Sidney Colvin writes:—

“In common with several of the correspondents who have answered your interesting inquiry, I find it no very

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easy matter to tell exactly what are the passages in prose and verse which have 'lodged themselves the most fixedly in my memory and afforded me the most continual delight.'

"To reduce the choice within reasonable compass I must confine myself to English, and even in English must ask leave to put aside both Shakespeare—whose riches, the more one thinks of them, seem the more entirely to baffle selection—and the writers of our own day, whose words are naturally the most familiar to one's mind and memory.

"Leaving these out of account, the passage of verse in the remainder of English literature which most haunts me (while at the same time I think it critically the most perfect and sustained piece of poetical execution out of *Virgil*) is certainly that towards the end of the first book of *Paradise Lost*, from 'Then straight commands, that the warlike sound' to 'Stands on the blasted heath.'

"Next, I think, to this, at least in my private affection and daily remembrance, come three lyrical passages from the moderns, very dissimilar from each other, but I find I can make no distinction in my love of them—the celebrated ninth stanza of Wordsworth's ode on the *Intimations of Immortality*, Shelley's *Stanzas written in Dejection in the Bay of Naples* (omitting the last), and the *Belle Dame sans Merci* of Keats.

"The above, of course, are all among the best known things in English poetry. In prose my choice is probably more singular, for the passage which on the whole most moves me with the sense of vital truth impressively expressed is that on the relations of poetry to science in Wordsworth's Preface to the later editions of his lyrical ballads.

"For other virtues of prose one must turn elsewhere.



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Thus for pure and equable charm of style I should make Addison's 'Vision of Mirza,' in the *Spectator*, my first choice. For the union of masculine strength with harmony several passages from Landor occur to me, pre-eminently perhaps the speech of Scipio to Polybius on the destruction of Carthage (*Selections from Landor*, in Macmillan's 'Golden Treasury' series, pp. 40, 41—'No, Polybius . . . in search of death'); while as a model of stirring panegyric I would take the conclusion of Southey's *Life of Nelson* as incomparable (Southey's *Life of Nelson*, *ad fin.*, from 'The death of Nelson was felt in England' down to 'departed in a brighter blaze of glory.')

"Lastly, I should like to mention, as among the passages humanly and morally most attractive to me, Burke's 'Character of his Wife' (with a few omissions), (Prior's *Life of Burke*, chap. ii., towards the end, and omitting the sentences, 'There is more of the coquette . . . affectation,' and, 'She does not display it so much . . . ought not to say or do'); and Scott's reflections in his Diary on first learning the probability of his ruin (Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, vol. viii. pp. 161-63, but particularly the sentences, 'Sad hearts too . . . was daily bread'). Technically the two passages last named have a contrasted interest—one, as an example, old-fashioned to us, of deliberate and balanced composition in the way of Johnson; the other as the perfectly unstudied and artless utterance of a manly spirit in distress."

### 34. Archdeacon Farrar writes:—

"When I received your request to mention the passages of verse and prose which I most admired I felt that insuperable difficulty of making a choice which has been expressed by many of your correspondents. The splen-

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dour of particular passages is often greatly dimmed by isolation from their context; and many passages which exercise the most powerful spell on the imagination derive no little of their force from the fact that they form the climax to all that has preceded them.

"I will, however, mention a few strains of magnificent eloquence by which I have been most deeply impressed. In doing so I will exclude the Bible, and exclude all but English literature. If you wish to make an anthology of all that is loveliest in Greek, in Latin, and in any other literature, I think that you should ask for separate selections in each language.

"Among the finest passages known to me in English prose I should mention the following:—

"1. On the Inward Reverence of a man towards his own Person, in Milton's *Reason of Church Government*, from 'And if the love of God as a fire sent from heaven' down to 'though in the deepest secrecy.'

"2. The almost dithyrambic outburst which forms the conclusion of Milton's *Of Reformation in England*, beginning at 'O sir, I doe now feele myself inwrapt' to the end.

"3. The passage in Milton's *Apology* beginning 'And long it was not after when I was confirmed in this opinion' down to 'deflouring and dishonourable'—from which passage, however, I should strike out several unsuitable sentences.

"These would not exhaust the passages which I should choose from the prose writings of Milton. They derive no little of their charm from the illustrations which they furnish of a uniquely noble personality.

"Among other passages of the loftiest religious eloquence I should name that on the 'Two Consciences'; the passage which begins, 'Be not deceived, for sin doth

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not end as it begins,' down to 'all his lights are put out at once,' from the sermon on *The Betrayal of Christ*, by Henry Smith, 'the silver-tongued.'

"Hooker, last clause of Book I. of the *Ecclesiastical Polity*, 'Of law there can be no less acknowledged' down to 'peace and joy.'

"Jeremy Taylor, second sermon on the *Return of Prayer*, from 'For so have I seen a lark,' etc., to 'So in the prayer of a good man.' *Holy Dying*, i. s. 2, 'So have I seen a rose' to 'outworn faces.'

"Coleridge, *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, Letter III., from 'Curse ye Meroz,' down to 'confusion of spirit.'

"Among prose passages of a descriptive and ethical kind I would mention Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, ii. pp. 4, 5. 'This Nebuchadnezzar curse' down to 'ploughed into the dust,' *Stones of Venice*, p. 1. Macaulay, end of the essay on Lord Chatham. De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-eater*, *ad fin.*, 'Then suddenly would come a dream' down to 'everlasting farewells.'

"Among specimens of oratory I would place Burke's passage on John Howard, in his farewell speech to his Bristol constituents.

"The passage about popularity in Mansfield's speech at a trial respecting the outlawry of John Wilkes, June 8th, 1768, beginning, 'I have received many anonymous letters,' down to '*Gloriam non invidiam putarem.*'

"Chatham's famous apostrophe to Lord Suffolk, November 8th, 1779, 'I am astonished, shocked, to hear such principles professed' down to 'let them purify this house and this country from this sin.'

"Brougham's speech on Law Reform, February 7th, 1828, from 'Of a truth sceptres are chiefly to be envied' down to 'No change can take away.'

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“But, sir, you have set us an endless task; it would be easy without a pause to mention twenty passages more, each equal in their way to most or all of these. The task of selecting the finest passages of English poetry is still more hopeless. In a volume entitled *With the Poets* I have endeavoured to select them from all except living writers.

“Pardon the necessary haste in which I write.”

35. Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton writes:—

“It would seem to me something impossible to do, and almost presumptuous to attempt to fix upon the best passage with which I am familiar, even in prose. Certain chapters of the Bible, certain noble sentences from Plato and from Marcus Aurelius, some pages from Sir Walter Raleigh, bits of Lamb where laughter and tears commingle, extracts from Ruskin, Carlyle, Emerson, Stevenson, George Meredith—what scores of well-remembered passages put forth claims it were hardly possible to disavow!

“In poetry an absolute expression of preference would be yet more difficult than in prose for one to whom the love of verse has been a life-long passion. I should like to take pages on pages, both from the plays and the sonnets of Shakespeare. I would have songs glad and sad from the Elizabethan men; sonnets and lyrics from Wordsworth; Shelley’s *Skylark*, and his odes to the Night and to the West Wind; the passionate, immortal melancholy of Keats’ *Ode to the Nightingale*; his *Ode to a Grecian Urn* also, and his sonnet, *On First Looking into Chapman’s ‘Homer.’* One could hardly pass by Coleridge’s *Kubla Khan*, his *Ancient Mariner*, or his *Christabel*. Then I should like to linger in Swinburne’s *Forsaken*

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*Garden.* I should hesitate between the *Tithonus* and the *Ulysses* of Tennyson; and from the many noble poems of Browning, or the exquisite work of Morris and Rossetti, how would it be possible to content oneself with a single extract?

"But if it must be that I choose, I fix on the lines in Act iv., Scene 1, of *The Tempest*, from 'These our actors' to 'Is rounded with a sleep,' and on the 30th Sonnet of Shakespeare, 'When to the sessions of sweet silent thought,' etc.

"Then, for souls who have suffered and doubted, would not the passage I am about to quote from Browning's 'Saul' almost transform a doubtful hope to a divine certainty?"

### 36. The Dean of St. Paul's writes:—

"I comply with your request, and send you the two passages which happen to be those which I find recurring oftenest to my mind just now. But you have asked a hard thing. I could not say absolutely that they are the passages in which I take most delight. Passages haunt one and give delight according to one's mood; they give way to others, and return in their season. So it is difficult to feel that I have fulfilled your request. At another time I might have sent you something from an alternative list.

"Your form is apparently intended for two passages. The two passages which I should send you just now are, for *poetry*, the following lines from Miss Smedley's *Story of Queen Isabel*, beginning with 'There is a day in Spring' and closing with 'And such a day was this for Isabel.'

"In *prose* this passage in Newman's *Sermons*, XIV., beginning with 'I mean musical sounds, as they are

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exhibited,' and closing with 'has the gift of eliciting them.' "

In poetry—

Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey*, 90–112, "For I have learned" to "moral being"; the "Immortality" ode.

Blanco White, sonnet, *Night*.

*Troilus and Cressida*, Act i., Scene 3, speech of Ulysses, 83–123.

Coleridge, *Ode to Dejection*, Sections IV. and V.

The opening stanzas of F. Myers' *Simmenthal*.

Verses by Clough, beginning with "Say not, the struggle nought availeth."

In prose—

Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book I. chapters i., xvi.

Burke, *French Revolution*, p. 178 (ed. 1852), "By a constitutional policy" to "our sepulchres and our altars"; p. 229, "Society is indeed a contract" to "employed and sanctified."

Macaulay, *History of England*, chapter v., "The chapel of the Tower."

37. The Rev. E. H. Plumptre, Dean of Wells, writes:—

"I should find it easier to select a hundred passages than half a dozen as examples, each in its way, of a completeness which leaves nothing to be desired. Happily the world is richer than it thinks. I assume, from the absence of any reference on the part of others to passages in the Old or New Testament, that they are excluded from the area of selection, otherwise they might, I think, simply as literature, have supplied at least ten out of my hundred. As it is, I note down ten passages which seem to me to be in the first class, above the line—noble, spirit-stirring, searching. I need not say that having written

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these many other passages throught my memory, reproaching me with their omission ; but I am starting on a journey, and have not time to balance their claims, so ‘ what I have written I have written.’”

The English passages are:—Milton, *Lycidas*; Shakespeare, *Sonnet 33*; Newman, *Lead Kindly Light*; and Hooker, *Eccles. Pol.*, I.

38. Mr. William Sharp writes:—

“It indisputably is no easy matter to name the best passages in prose and verse with which one may be acquainted, nor is it a much simpler task even to fix upon one’s favourites. So much depends upon mood and circumstance. Yet (without designating them as the best) I venture to specify a few passages and poems (or extracts) which have a permanent fascination for me.

“In poetry—

“(1) The penultimate stanza of Keats’s *Ode to a Nightingale*, beginning—

‘Thou wast not born for death, Immortal Bird !’

“(2) Marlowe’s lines about Helen in *Faustus*—

‘ Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,  
And burned the topless towers of Ilium ?

Oh, thou art fairer than the evening air  
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars.'

“(3) This stanza from Wordsworth’s *Ode to Duty*—

‘Stern lawgiver ! yet thou dost wear  
The Godhead’s most benignant grace ;  
Nor know we anything so fair  
As is the smile upon thy face :

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Flowers laugh before thee on their beds ;  
And fragrance in thy footing treads ;  
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong ;  
And the most ancient heavens, through  
Thee, are fresh and strong.'

"(4) The first thirty lines of Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*.

"(5) Sydney Dobell's *Keith of Ravelston*.

"(6) The stanza from Fitzgerald's translation of Omar Khayyàm's *Rubaiyât*—

'They say the Lion and the Lizard keep  
The courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep :  
And Bahrá'm, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass  
Stamps o'er his Head but cannot break his sleep.'

"(7) Rossetti's sonnet on Giorgione's Pastoral ; and the lines describing the mystic wood in the third stanza of *The Portrait* (with the succeeding stanza), the wood with—

'Many a shape whose name  
Not itself knoweth, and old dew,  
And your own footsteps meeting you.'

"(8) The stanza in Keats's *Ode to Melancholy*, beginning—

'She dwells with beauty—Beauty that must die !'

"(9) Principal Shairp's ballad, *The Bush Aboon Traquair*.

"In prose—

"Sir Thomas Browne's *Hydriotaphia*, chapter v.

"Ruskin's *Modern Painters* (Cloud Beauty).

"And the description of a sea wave (from Introduction to *Harbours of England*).

"The passage from Raleigh's *History of the World*, beginning 'O eloquent, just, and mighty death !' down to the words, '*Hic jacet !*'

"The description of 'La Gioconda' in Walter Pater's



## FINE PASSAGES IN PROSE AND POETRY

essay on Leonardo, second edition, pp. 134–6, beginning ‘The presence that rose,’ etc., down to end of top line, p. 136, ‘eyelids and the hands.’ The passage from Epilogue to first edition of Pater’s *Studies in the Renaissance*, beginning with ‘To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame.’

“Sir William Rowan Hamilton’s Collegiate ‘Address on Astronomy,’ 1831.

“Milton’s *Areopagitica*, the passage beginning ‘Me-thinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks,’ and ending with the words, ‘above all liberties.’”

### 39. Mr. Frederick Tennyson writes :—

In poetry—

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, “To be, or not to be, that is the question” to “And lose the name of action,” etc. *Measure for Measure*, “Aye, but to die and go we know not where” to “To what we fear of death.”

In prose—

St. John’s Gospel, chapter xi., verse 25, “I am the Resurrection and the Life” to “Believest thou this?” Revelation, chapter xix. verse 1, “And after these things I heard a great voice” to “For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

### 40. Mr. Edmund Yates selects, in poetry :—

Wordsworth, Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey, “Five years have passed” to “More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake.”

## FINE PASSAGES IN PROSE AND POETRY

Tennyson, *Maud*, Canto XVIII., "I have led her home" to "Let all be well, be well."

In prose—

Thackeray, *The Newcomes*, last chapter, "Clive, and sometimes the boy with him" to "the presence of the master"; also another piece of the last chapter beginning with "So, weeks passed away."



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